

**THE THING-IN-ITSELF AND WILL IN THE THOUGHT OF
SCHOPENHAUER**

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Tasmania

May, 1995

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ABSTRACT

The central claim of Schopenhauer's philosophy is that the thing-in-itself is will. After giving a brief overview of the way in which this claim has been interpreted by other commentators I argue that it has at least six possible interpretations. I assess the relative importance of each, both to Schopenhauer himself and to the commentator attempting to construct the most consistent account of Schopenhauer's central doctrines.

I argue that Interpretations 1 and 2, according to which the thing-in-itself is identical with the will or the will-to-live, are the most important to Schopenhauer, while Interpretation 3 is the most consistent with his other doctrines. According to Interpretation 3, while the thing-in-itself is will, it also has other aspects, and I argue that these other aspects are the objects of mystical awareness and salvation. According to Interpretation 4 the thing-in-itself is unknown but is called will in the qualified sense that the will stands nearest to the thing-in-itself, and according to Interpretation 5 the thing-in-itself is called will but only metaphorically; I argue that these two interpretations are less well supported than 1, 2 and 3. Finally, according to Interpretation 6, the will is the metaphysical but non-noumenal essence of the phenomenal world, and I argue that this is suggestive of a world-view that Schopenhauer might well have embraced had his thought continued to develop.

Next, I turn to issues of justification. One, is Schopenhauer justified in claiming that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will? Two, is he justified in claiming that we can have knowledge of the thing-in-itself and know it as will? Three, is he justified in using language to talk about the thing-in-itself and describe it as will? I argue that despite the inadequacies in Schopenhauer's own arguments, other arguments provide some measure of support for his claim that there is a thing-in-itself that we can know and describe as will.

In Appendices 1, 2 and 3, I consider how the possibility arises of multiple interpretations of Schopenhauer's fundamental claim that the thing-in-itself is will, my discussion focussing on some of the influences of Kant and Eastern thought on his thinking, and some of the influences of Plato.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish first to acknowledge the generous assistance of my supervisor, Professor Frank White. His guidance has been invaluable in giving direction to my research, in providing constructive criticism of all my written work, and in facilitating opportunities for professional development. I am also most grateful for his unfailing patience, encouragement and friendship.

I am indebted to Dr Edgar Sleinis, who has been a constant source of intellectual stimulation and encouragement and who provided many useful suggestions on the final draft. To Diane Boyle, my heartfelt thanks for her very supportive friendship, for computer training and for secretarial assistance. I am indebted to Dr Julian Young, Professor John Atwell, Dr Manfred Kleinschnieder and Dr Asim Roy for their generous contribution of ideas and constructive criticism. To Professor Bill Joske I owe thanks for his encouragement in getting me started and for his support throughout, and I am most grateful to Andrezej Kowaluk for his careful reading of the final draft. I am much indebted to Kylie McShane, Leila Shotton, Dr John Colman, Dr Vojislav Bozickovic, and Paul Simpson for their friendship and collegial support, and wish to thank Professor Selwyn Grave, Professor Michael Roe, Mrs Marjery Eagle and Dr Judy Sallis for their kindness and encouraging words. To Jan Halley, Rosemary Dobber, Lesley Gardner, Fiona Melling, Kathy Hawkes and Elizabeth and Keith Kennedy-Tyson I am very grateful for their much-valued companionship, laughter and good-will and I owe thanks to Dr Stefan Petrow for his encouragement and advice. To the library staff at the University of Tasmania I extend thanks for their cheerful assistance and professional service.

Finally, and most importantly, I wish to acknowledge with immense gratitude the caring support and patience of my family. Without them, this thesis would not have been possible.

To my parents

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ABBREVIATIONS AND REFERENCES

WORKS BY SCHOPENHAUER

BM	<i>On the Basis of Morality</i>
FFR	<i>The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason</i>
FW	<i>On the Freedom of the Will</i>
MSR	<i>Manuscript Remains in Four Volumes</i>
PP	<i>Parerga and Paralipomena</i>
WN	<i>On the Will in Nature</i>
WWI	<i>The World as Will and Idea</i>
WWR	<i>The World as Will and Representation</i>

References are given as follows: work—page number of English text translation—(page number of German text). For example: WWR 1, 110(155). For all references of this type the first mentioned number refers to a page in the relevant English translation. The number in brackets refers either to a page in the relevant volume of the edition by Diogenes or to a page in the relevant volume of the *Nachlaß* (see Sources Consulted for details of texts).

WORKS BY KANT

CPR	<i>Critique of Pure Reason</i> . References are by standard A and B marginal numbers, indicating page numbers of 1st (1781) and 2nd (1787) editions, followed by page number of English text translation.
CPracR	<i>Critique of Practical Reason</i>
GM	<i>Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals</i>
Prol.	<i>Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics</i>

INTRODUCTION

THE APPROACH

In this thesis I examine the fundamental claim of Schopenhauer's philosophy that the thing-in-itself is will. I assess this claim within the context of Schopenhauer's central metaphysical, epistemological and conceptual doctrines, and within the broader framework constituted by the main influences on his thinking.

In the preface to the first edition of Schopenhauer's main work *The World as Will and Representation* he says that his philosophy is the unfolding of a single thought. His work, he says, should be seen as an organic whole in which every part supports the whole just as much as it is supported by the whole. He also insists that an understanding of his thought requires an acquaintance with all of the following: his earliest work, *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, Kant's philosophy, the works of Plato and the teachings of the *Vedas*.

My objective is thus five-fold. First, to analyse the texts of Schopenhauer to establish what he himself asserts concerning the relationship that exists between the thing-in-itself and will; second, to assess the coherence of his various claims with his central metaphysical, epistemological and conceptual doctrines; third, to assess his justification for claiming that there is a thing-in-itself that we can know and describe as will; fourth, to consider ways in which such claims might be justified even if Schopenhauer's own attempts to do so are not adequate; and finally to propose ways in which the influence of Kant, Eastern thought and Plato shows itself in Schopenhauer's philosophy, particularly in relation to what he asserts about the thing-in-itself and will.

The thesis is written in the broad tradition of analytic philosophy. I have made some use of secondary sources in German, but most of the secondary literature that I refer to is in English. However, all references to primary sources are cross-referenced to the German texts.

SCHOPENHAUER'S STATUS AS A PHILOSOPHER

Since the early part of this century a prevalent attitude to Schopenhauer has been to see him as a peripheral figure in the history of philosophy. It is therefore vital at the outset to explain why I reject this view.

The last 20 years has witnessed a marked revival of interest in Schopenhauer's philosophy in the English-speaking world, with the publication of at least twelve new monographs, and numerous articles. This follows a period of relative neglect in which his status as a philosopher was under threat. In part, this attitude reflected the general disdain for speculative metaphysics that characterised much of the first half of twentieth century philosophical thought. In part, it can be attributed to Schopenhauer's style; for it is a literary and often flamboyant style with numerous references to diverse topics, both philosophical and non-philosophical. Hence, he has often been seen as a person with considerable literary skill and an original mind, but as one who does not quite measure up as a philosopher.

However, the renewed interest in Schopenhauer's thought has demonstrated that whatever differences there may be between his style and that of other philosophers, these should not distract us from appreciating the genuine worth of much of what he has to say. His influence on such philosophers as Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, both of whom have exercised considerable influence on twentieth-century philosophy, is already testament to Schopenhauer's merit. His double aspect view of reality and his theory of

human action have been acknowledged by Brian O'Shaughnessy,¹ and among recent monographs on Schopenhauer's thought there have been extended analyses of his epistemological and conceptual doctrines,² his views on the self,³ his theory of character,⁴ and his metaphysical, aesthetic and moral doctrines.⁵

Finally, his trenchant critique of Kant's philosophy and his status as one of the first Western philosophers to recognise and take seriously the philosophy of the East make the study of Schopenhauer's thought a worthwhile and exciting project for contemporary analytic philosophy.

¹ See Brian O'Shaughnessy, *The Will, A Dual Aspect Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

² See F. C. White, *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

³ See Christopher Janaway, *Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

⁴ See John E. Atwell, *Schopenhauer: The Human Character* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990).

⁵ See Julian Young, *Willing and Unwilling: A Study in the Philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1987).

CHAPTER 1

THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION OF SCHOPENHAUER'S CLAIM THAT THE THING-IN-ITSELF IS WILL

The traditional interpretation of Schopenhauer's metaphysics is that he identifies the thing-in-itself as will.¹ In this chapter I survey the views of those commentators who adopt this interpretation, highlighting the difficulties that each believes that it generates. To bring out more clearly what is entailed by the traditional interpretation I also survey the views of those commentators who acknowledge that Schopenhauer identifies the thing-in-itself as will, but who maintain that he only ever intends this identity to be a qualified one.

As early as 1820, in a review of *The World as Will and Representation*, Volume 1, the German philosopher Herbart criticises Schopenhauer on the grounds that his identification of the will with the thing-in-itself cannot be made consistent with his Kantian epistemology. For if our awareness of will occurs in self-consciousness, and if as Kant teaches, introspective awareness occurs under the form of time, then our knowledge of ourselves in self-consciousness must be phenomenal and therefore cannot be of the thing-in-itself.²

In keeping with his general contempt for critics Schopenhauer did not formally respond to Herbart's criticism, and in 1856 he claimed that he had

¹ Since the thing-in-itself is also referred to as the noumenon by some commentators, I shall use that term when referring to their comments. However, since Schopenhauer explicitly criticises Kant for referring to things-in-themselves as noumena (*WWR* 1, p. 477(584)), I shall on most other occasions use the term 'thing-in-itself'.

² See Harald Höffding, *A History of Modern Philosophy* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1915), p. 226 (note 51).

read it only once in his life.¹ However, in *The World as Will and Representation*, Volume 2, although he persists with his claim that the thing-in-itself is will, he does so with increasing qualifications. On the traditional interpretation of his metaphysics, while these qualifications are sometimes taken to be an indication of Schopenhauer's increasing awareness of the epistemological difficulties facing his doctrine, it is not taken that they reflect any change in his fundamental position.

After the initial reviews of the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, little was written about Schopenhauer's philosophy until the 1850s and until then, he remained largely unread and unacknowledged. However, with the publication of *Parerga and Paralipomena* in 1851, Schopenhauer finally achieved the fame that he had so long desired. In 1852 John Oxenford wrote a review for the *Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review*, and in 1853 he wrote an article for the same journal entitled 'Iconoclasm in German Philosophy'. This article was read by Ernst Otto Lindner, a friend of Schopenhauer, who arranged for the publication of a German translation in the *Vossische Zeitung*. The effect was dramatic and the sudden interest in Schopenhauer's philosophy called for new editions of his other published works.²

Throughout the rest of the nineteenth century his ideas remained influential not only in philosophy, but also among artists and the educated lay public. However, interest in his philosophy, as in metaphysical speculation generally, declined in the early and middle decades of the twentieth century, and little was written about Schopenhauer (at least in the English-speaking world) during this period. But the last two decades have seen a marked revival of interest in his

¹ Ibid.

² *PP* 1, p. xii.

philosophy, and generally the recent works display a more detailed analysis of his various doctrines and the problems that they face than do the earlier works. Accordingly, in the following selection of comments from those who have written about Schopenhauer's philosophy after 1850, my emphasis is on the more recent works. Nevertheless, I also include views from those earlier commentators where I consider their views to be relevant and useful to the discussion. As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, my interest here is in those who adopt the traditional interpretation, which posits that Schopenhauer holds that the thing-in-itself is will.

One of the earliest English speaking commentators is Helen Zimmern. In her book *Schopenhauer*, she comments cautiously on Schopenhauer's attempt to justify his assertion that the thing-in-itself is will. She contends that although his claim that the will is the real cause of existence may be logically defensible, there is no doubt that it is in the first instance a subjective judgment based upon Schopenhauer's own individuality.¹

W. Wallace, in his book *Life of Schopenhauer*, draws attention to the problem of the temporal nature of self-conscious awareness of will. While he allows that we can to some extent escape the conditions of ordinary consciousness, he maintains that we are 'never completely released from the separations of time and place which reflection institutes'; and consequently, we can know the will only as a temporal phenomenon. He holds that Schopenhauer appeals to a 'mystic process of introspection'² to justify his claim that the thing-in-itself is will, but he doubts that this is acceptable.³

¹ Helen Zimmern, *Schopenhauer* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1932 (based on 1876 edn.)), p. 155.

² W. Wallace, *Life of Schopenhauer* (London: Walter Scott Publishing, 1890), p. 124.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 120-24.

William Caldwell, in his book *Schopenhauer's System and its Philosophical Significance*, sees Schopenhauer as a man spoilt by philosophical idealism who struggles vainly to get to reality.¹ He thinks that Schopenhauer's many inconsistencies 'may be reduced to the one fact of his losing his head over the distinction between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself'.² Schopenhauer's philosophy, he writes, rests on a hypothetical construction of the world that requires a 'leap of the mind of man somehow beyond appearances into the core of reality'.³ But, he asks, 'how can the root of the world be known if the very essence of this root is to conceal itself?'⁴ He concludes that: 'His [Schopenhauer's] philosophy would have been still more intelligible if he had revised his definition of metaphysic and had said that there is no transcendental knowledge whatever of reality.'⁵

Stephen Colvin, in his doctoral thesis entitled *Schopenhauer's Doctrine of the Thing-in-itself and his attempt to relate it to the World of Phenomena*, examines in some detail Schopenhauer's attempt to relate the world of phenomena to the thing-in-itself. He believes that all such attempts are radically inconsistent with Schopenhauer's theory of knowledge as expressed both in his main work and in *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*.⁶ For Schopenhauer asserts that the intuition of the essence of the world occurs in self-consciousness. But Colvin notes that this claim is a direct break from the Kantian theory of cognition which maintains that it is not only our external experiences that are phenomenal but also our internal experiences,

¹ William Caldwell, *Schopenhauer's System and its Philosophical Significance* (London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1896), p. 512.

² Ibid., p. 470.

³ Ibid., p. 40.

⁴ Ibid., p. 93.

⁵ Ibid., p. 453.

⁶ Stephen Sheldon Colvin, *Schopenhauer's Doctrine of the Thing-in-itself and his attempt to relate it to the World of Phenomena* (Providence: The Franklin Press, 1897), pp. 10-11.

since these are always conditioned by their succession in time, and time is a phenomenal form. Noting that Schopenhauer himself recognises the temporal aspect of internal consciousness, Colvin concludes that Schopenhauer tacitly admits that we do not directly know the thing-in-itself.¹

Colvin further believes that Schopenhauer makes illicit use of the causal law to arrive at his conclusion that the thing-in-itself is will, since the will, according to Schopenhauer, is supposed to *act* and be the source of all *power*; and these concepts are the very essence of the causal idea. Colvin goes on to argue that when Schopenhauer extends his claim and asserts that the inner nature of *all* phenomena is will, he appeals to an argument from analogy. But, argues Colvin, the entire validity of this argument rests on the assumption that like causes produce like effects.² So it seems that Schopenhauer's real justification for claiming that the thing-in-itself is will is not an appeal to direct inner experience, but an illicit use of the causal law. Nevertheless, Colvin gives Schopenhauer credit for seeing that the innermost essence of personality is revealed in feeling, and this claim he considers to be a weighty psychological truth. But regarding Schopenhauer's further claim that through feeling we are aware of a noumenal will, Colvin asserts that this is a fallacy too evident to need criticism.³ He concludes that the system that Schopenhauer presents to us is by no means a unity when treated as a metaphysical doctrine, and that 'here it breaks down completely and here is seen the impossibility of grounding a transcendental philosophy on the Kantian epistemology.'⁴

Frederick Copleston, in his book *Arthur Schopenhauer*, interprets Schopenhauer as asserting that in our inner consciousness of will we find the

¹ Ibid., pp. 28-29.

² Ibid., p. 33.

³ Ibid., p. 31.

⁴ Ibid., p. 70.

only immediate knowledge of the inner nature of the world. And this, he thinks, presupposes that for Schopenhauer the concept of will is the expression of a direct consciousness of the noumenal.¹ To this implied claim Copleston makes three objections. First, most of us cannot claim complete and perfectly luminous self-consciousness in which there is no distinction between subject and object; and, given that this is so, there can be no direct consciousness of the noumenal. Second, it seems impossible to explain how the noumenal will can know itself through phenomena, since such knowledge must surely be phenomenal. Moreover, asks Copleston, how can the noumenal will know at all? Third, Copleston sees no justification on Schopenhauer's own premises for affirming that the will is not representation; for the term 'will' is either an abstract term or a term derived from perception, and in neither case can it be an adequate expression of the noumenon. Copleston notes that at times Schopenhauer admits to a certain agnosticism in regard to the will, but concludes that it seems impossible for there to be any knowledge of the will at all.²

Patrick Gardiner, in his book *Schopenhauer*, notes that Schopenhauer speaks of two kinds of knowledge, and Gardiner thinks that this distinction is important to an understanding of Schopenhauer's claim to identify the thing-in-itself as will. The first kind of knowledge we obtain when we are mere observers of the movements and functionings of persons and things. Schopenhauer believes that body and will are intimately connected, with bodily movements being objectifications of acts of will, and that consequently when we observe our actions and those of others we also gain knowledge of what is willed. The second kind of knowledge, Schopenhauer thinks, is of ourselves

¹ Frederick Copleston, *Arthur Schopenhauer: Philosopher of Pessimism* (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1946), p. 78.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

as self-moving agents who are responsible for our actions, and he believes that in many cases we require no observation at all to acquire such knowledge. Gardiner suspects that it is the 'transparency' of this second kind of knowledge that lies behind Schopenhauer's claim that our consciousness of our own particular acts of will is both immediate and unique, since it is an awareness that seems to lie outside ordinary sense-perception while at the same time not being obviously based upon independently identifiable organic sensations and feelings. Gardiner states that it is in this elusive and subjective 'sense of ourselves acting' that, according to Schopenhauer, we come closest to the thing-in-itself.¹

Gardiner raises two objections to Schopenhauer's thesis here. First, he asserts that Schopenhauer's account of the 'inner' experience of acts of will is obscure and inadequate. Second, even granting the distinction in the mode of awareness between our 'inner' experience of acts of will and our consciousness of the movements of others and our selves, he asks what justification Schopenhauer has for claiming that this 'inner' experience gives us access to the thing-in-itself. Gardiner contends that Schopenhauer is caught on the horns of a dilemma. If, as he says, our acquaintance with our inner will falls within the range of our experience, then surely the will must be a representation and therefore cannot be the thing-in-itself. If, on the other hand, the will is not representation but is noumenal, then how is it that we can have experience of it? Gardiner argues that Schopenhauer's claim that we have direct experience of the noumenal will negates his empirically-grounded metaphysics, and ignores the Kantian strictures on pure speculation. Furthermore, he notes that this claim is inconsistent with Schopenhauer's own

¹ Patrick Gardiner, *Schopenhauer* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1963), pp. 170-71.

theory of conceptual significance, which stipulates that concepts only have meaning if they are rooted in perceptual experience.¹

However, Gardiner notes that in the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer drastically qualifies his earlier claims regarding the knowability of the will by asserting that even the inward experience we have of our own will by no means affords us an adequate knowledge of the thing-in-itself, since this knowledge is still limited by the conditions imposed by the subject-object polarity and the inner form of time. Gardiner contends that such passages imply that the will as thing-in-itself has passed beyond all cognitive range, and that inner awareness yields only representation.² However, in asserting this, it is clear that Gardiner believes that even in these later passages Schopenhauer still identifies the thing-in-itself as will in spite of the acknowledged epistemological difficulties.

David Hamlyn, in his book *Schopenhauer*, argues that Schopenhauer, like Kant, wants to provide a basis for phenomena, but that unlike Kant he is not content with a purely negative concept of a thing-in-itself. Instead, he claims that a positive insight into the nature of reality is possible through an insight into our own actions, and his conclusion is that the thing-in-itself is will. Hamlyn asserts that while Schopenhauer is quite clear in expressing this conclusion, he is far less clear about the details that he offers in support of it.³ Hamlyn looks first at Schopenhauer's reasons for assuming the existence of the thing-in-itself at all. He suggests that there are two reasons, the first of which is simply the profound influence of Kant's teaching on Schopenhauer. The second reason, in which Hamlyn sees not only the key to understanding Schopenhauer's claim that there is a thing-in-itself, but also his claim that it is

¹ Ibid., pp. 171-72.

² Gardiner, *Schopenhauer*, p. 173.

³ D. W. Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), pp. 80-81.

will, is that Schopenhauer believes that in the will we find something that is not representation. According to Hamlyn, Schopenhauer then simply assumes that anything that is not representation must be a thing-in-itself, and therefore concludes that the will must be Kant's thing-in-itself.¹

Hamlyn asserts that the crucial point in Schopenhauer's argument is his claim that we have a special insight into our own bodily actions just because they are willed, and he notes that there is a connection between this claim and what later philosophers have called 'knowledge without observation' or 'intentional knowledge'. He writes that although Schopenhauer is not altogether clear about what such knowledge consists in, he is clear on the following two points. First, that an act of will is inseparable from an action of the body and from knowledge of the body.² Second, that the knowledge gained in an exercise of the will is unconditioned and direct, and therefore quite different from any form of knowledge dependent upon observation. Regarding this second point, Hamlyn notes that Schopenhauer later qualifies the proposition that we have an immediate knowledge of the will by conceding that in self-consciousness there is both a knower (the intellect) and a known (the will), and also that our knowledge of our own will is always in its temporal successive acts. Given these qualifications, Hamlyn asks how it is that we can know the will as thing-itself, since it seems that we only know the will in acts of will, and these are phenomenal.³

Despite what he sees as obscurity of presentation, Hamlyn gives Schopenhauer credit for attempting to unravel the complex and difficult subject of agency. He believes that Schopenhauer highlights the important difference between our knowledge of *what* we do when we act and our knowledge *that*

¹ Ibid., pp. 81-82.

² Ibid., p. 83.

³ Ibid., pp. 84-85, and see *WWR* 2, p. 107.

we act. The former is a representation and like all other representations is conditioned by being related to other representations according to the principle of sufficient reason, whereas the latter is known directly. It is this point that Hamlyn believes lies behind Schopenhauer's assertion that in self-awareness we have immediate knowledge of ourselves.¹

Hamlyn contends, however, that it is a further question whether Schopenhauer's recognition of the above point provides any grounds for his identification of the will with the thing-in-itself. He holds that Schopenhauer provides only one premise in support of his conclusion that a thing-in-itself exists and that it is will; namely, we know *that* we act in a way that is different from any knowledge that comes by way of representation. Hamlyn concedes that if we accept Schopenhauer's claim that an action is a manifestation of will, then it follows that our knowledge of the will is different from our knowledge that comes by way of representation. However, he argues that this gives us no warrant for claiming anything about things-in-themselves or their identity. At best, all that Schopenhauer is entitled to say is that we have knowledge of something that is non-phenomenal. Hamlyn concludes that Schopenhauer's arguments for the existence of the thing-in-itself and its identification with will both rely on the unexamined assumption that anything that is not a representation is a thing-in-itself, and that this leaves too much unexamined for the argument to be persuasive.² He sums up by saying that while Schopenhauer's conception of the world as will is striking and has a considerable grandeur, the argument that leads to an identification of the will with the thing-in-itself is surely invalid.³

¹ Ibid., pp. 90-91.

² Ibid., pp. 93-94.

³ Ibid., p. 102.

Bryan Magee, in his book *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, points out that 'the correct identification and characterisation of the noumenon was regarded by Schopenhauer as his own main achievement, and the one which unlocked the secret of the world.'¹ He goes on to note that Schopenhauer employs three clear uses of the word 'will', and that it is only the third that applies to the noumenon. He says that the word 'will' in the first sense refers to those acts of will that correspond to voluntary acts of will by an agent, and he notes that for Schopenhauer the act of will and the bodily action are one and the same thing seen from different points of view.²

Commenting on Schopenhauer's second use of the word 'will,' Magee notes that it has a more extended reference, and includes everything that we know in inner awareness such as our desires, hopes, feelings and moods, and excludes only the emotionally neutral processes of thinking. Magee thinks that this second sense of the word 'will' is pivotal to Schopenhauer's philosophy because it shows that in at least the case of one material object, one's own body, the sum total of its observable features comprises only one aspect of its existence; it is also at the same time something else.³ While he thinks that this knowledge we have of a physical object from the inside is impressive, Magee asserts that for at least three reasons it cannot be knowledge of the noumenon. The first two reasons are familiar. First, when we are aware of feelings, etc., they are always apprehended under the phenomenal form of time. Second, inner awareness always retains the subject-object polarity of phenomenal knowledge. Magee's third reason pertains to Schopenhauer's belief that the noumenon cannot be manifold since it is free of the forms of individuation, space and time. But as experience of our inner selves is of differentiated

¹ Bryan Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 96.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 124-25.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

feelings, hopes, etc., it follows that our awareness of these cannot be an awareness of the noumenon. For these reasons Magee asserts that for Schopenhauer our direct knowledge of ourselves in inner sense is still knowledge of phenomena.¹ He notes, however, that because such knowledge is free of the phenomenal forms of space and causality it is very different from our knowledge of other objects, and he contends that Schopenhauer's discussion of our knowledge of our own will highlights the importance of time as an indispensable form of awareness. Drawing these threads together, Magee concludes that while no direct knowledge (knowledge by acquaintance) of the noumenon is possible, we may yet hope to learn something about the noumenon (knowledge by description).

With this conclusion in mind Magee goes on to discuss Schopenhauer's third use of the word 'will'.² Unfortunately, his discussion of the word 'will' in this third sense is not altogether clear; and, although he tries to remove misunderstandings in a subsequent paper, I do not believe that his attempt is entirely successful.

Magee asserts that 'what is indicated by our knowledge of the one material object in the universe that we know from the inside is that all material objects, in their inner nature, are primitive, blind, unconscious force inaccessible to knowledge.' He continues by stating that for Schopenhauer the whole universe is the objectification of this force, which manifests itself most immediately in the phenomenal world as energy, and less immediately in such things as gravity, magnetism, electricity, the winds and the tides, the child in the womb and the chicken in the egg. Magee adds that according to Schopenhauer these things are all phenomenal manifestations of 'a single

¹ Ibid., pp. 128-30.

² Ibid., p. 130.

underlying drive which is ultimately undifferentiated'. He asserts that this is Schopenhauer's central doctrine, which, though it cannot be proved, can nevertheless be supported by its power to explain the nature of our phenomenal experience.¹

Though the above summary suggests that Magee holds that for Schopenhauer the noumenon is a single underlying force that manifests itself in the phenomenal world in various ways, he does not say so explicitly until a few pages further on where he says:

From now on we shall refer to the noumenon as 'will' and by this we shall mean no more than a universal, aimless, unindividuated, non-alive force such as manifests itself in, for example, the phenomenon of gravity.²

Given this passage and Magee's preceding comments as discussed above, I think it reasonable to draw the following conclusions. First, Magee claims that according to Schopenhauer the noumenon is will. This claim clearly places Magee within the traditional interpretation. Second, Magee maintains that when Schopenhauer calls the noumenon 'will', the word 'will' refers to a universal, aimless, unindividuated, non-alive force. Third, Magee holds that Schopenhauer's claim to know that the noumenal will is a universal, aimless force, is a claim to knowledge based not upon direct experience of the noumenon, but upon inference after reflection on the nature of phenomenal experience. In making this claim, Magee differs from most other commentators of the traditional interpretation, since their view is that Schopenhauer bases his assertion that the noumenon is will on an alleged direct experience of the noumenon in self-consciousness. Fourth, according to

¹ Ibid., pp. 139-40.

² Ibid., p. 144.

Magee, the noumenal will manifests itself most immediately as energy in the phenomenal world.¹

In the 1989 Bithell Memorial Lecture, Magee continues to assert that according to Schopenhauer the noumenon is will, that all knowledge of the noumenon is inferential, and that the most immediate manifestation of the noumenal will is energy. However, while he rejects claims made by some commentators that in his book he interprets Schopenhauer as identifying the noumenon with energy, he is simply silent about his earlier suggestion that Schopenhauer identifies the noumenal will with a universal, aimless force. In the lecture, when detailing what according to Schopenhauer we can know about the noumenal will, he mentions only that it is undifferentiated and that as such it is the metaphysical ground for morality and compassion.²

Given this lack of clarity, it is difficult to be certain how Magee interprets Schopenhauer's claims about our knowledge of the noumenon. However, if we accept his position to be that Schopenhauer identifies the noumenon as a universal, aimless force, the next issue concerns the connection between this claim and Schopenhauer's assertion that the noumenon is will. In his book, Magee argues that having identified the nature of the noumenon Schopenhauer is faced with the practical necessity of giving it a name. He thinks that

¹ I take Magee's considered position in his book to be that for Schopenhauer the noumenon as will is a universal, aimless force. However, the following passage, while ambiguous, suggests that Magee thinks that Schopenhauer also equates the noumenon as will with energy.

He [Schopenhauer] taught that the entire world of phenomena in time and space, internally connected by causality, was the self-objectification of an impersonal, non-alive, timelessly active *energy* which he termed 'will' (Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, p. 161).

However, given his comments in the Bithell Lecture where he rejects the claim that the noumenon is to be identified as energy, I think that the above passage can only be considered as an aberration.

² Bryan Magee, *Misunderstanding Schopenhauer, The 1989 Bithell Memorial Lecture* (London: Institute of Germanic Studies, University of London, 1989), pp. 16-18.

Schopenhauer chooses the word 'will' because in our awareness of our own will in inner sense we come closest to the noumenon. The explanation of this is that we ourselves are both phenomenal and noumenal, and that in knowledge of our inner selves our awareness is free of the phenomenal forms of space and causality, leaving only the form of time to veil the noumenon. According to Magee, it is this unique knowledge of our will in inner sense that introduces the third sense of the word 'will'. He notes that Schopenhauer warns the reader that in calling the noumenon 'will' he is appropriating the word as a technical term, not to be confused with either of its two previous senses, and certainly not with its normal sense. However, Magee contends that, despite these warnings, Schopenhauer's choice of the word 'will' to denote the noumenon has led to perennial misunderstandings of his philosophy.¹

Magee goes on to assert that the first of these misunderstandings stems from what he regards as an 'astonishing lapse or aberration' by Schopenhauer in a passage that states that the concept of will does not after all originate in the phenomenon.² He takes this passage to mean that Schopenhauer holds that we directly know the noumenon as will, a claim that Magee thinks is utterly implausible given Schopenhauer's Kantian epistemology.³ The other misunderstanding concerns the nature of the will. Because in its everyday use the notion of will is associated with that of human agency, Magee says that connotations of personality, consciousness, and goal-seeking are often attributed to Schopenhauer's noumenal will. But he thinks that this is a mistake, since for Schopenhauer the word 'will', when used to describe the noumenon, has none of these qualities. Instead, Magee asserts that will as

¹ Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, pp. 140-41.

² Ibid., p. 141, and see *WWR* 1, p. 112(156-57).

³ Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, pp. 141-42.

noumenon refers to 'a universal, aimless, unindividuated, non-alive force such as manifests itself in, for example, the phenomenon of gravity'.¹

Magee concludes that it would have been far better if Schopenhauer had called the noumenon 'force' or 'energy', since at least these terms do not carry the connotations of the conscious, goal-directed activity that is associated with our usual usage of the word 'will'.² However, in the later Bithell Lecture he states that it would crucially have helped the cause of self-clarification if Schopenhauer had not associated the concept of the noumenon with any empirical concept whatever. Magee continues:

For, no matter what the empirical concept chosen, the consequence would have been that he was associating the noumenon with an object of possible knowledge. And that would always have opened him to the misreading that he thought the noumenon could be known—and, what is more, that he was telling us what it is.³

The above passage is particularly puzzling, since it suggests that absolutely no knowledge of the noumenon is possible; yet in the previous paragraph, Magee asserts that Schopenhauer, 'unlike Kant, thought that it was possible for us to get to know one or two things about it [the noumenon]'. I can only assume that in the above passage Magee is referring to what he takes to be Schopenhauer's belief in the impossibility of *direct* knowledge of the noumenon. However, even granting this, it remains unclear whether in the lecture Magee still maintains that Schopenhauer believes that even though we have no direct acquaintance with the noumenon, we nonetheless 'know of it' that it is a universal, aimless, unindividuated, non-alive force.

¹ Ibid., p. 144.

² Ibid.

³ Magee, *Misunderstanding Schopenhauer*, p. 16.

To summarise: I take the following to be Magee's central claims. First, according to Schopenhauer, the thing-in-itself is will. Second, according to Schopenhauer our knowledge of the noumenon is based not on direct experience of it, but upon inference after reflection on the nature of phenomenal experience. Third, and more controversially, in calling the noumenon 'will', Schopenhauer is referring to a 'universal, aimless, unindividuated, non-alive force such as manifests itself in, for example the phenomenon of gravity'. Finally, and again not without some controversy, according to Schopenhauer this force manifests itself most immediately in the phenomenal world as energy.

Christopher Janaway, in his recent book *Self and World in Schopenhauer's Philosophy*, devotes a chapter to the knowing of the thing-in-itself in Schopenhauer's philosophy. He begins by noting the important influence of Kant, an influence that he believes Schopenhauer acknowledges when he says of Kant's *Third Antinomy* that it 'is the point where Kant's philosophy leads on to mine, or where mine issues from his as from its stem'.¹ This antinomy concerns the opposition between the principle of causality and human freedom, and Schopenhauer numbers among Kant's greatest achievements that in his attempt to solve the antinomy he connects freedom with the thing-in-itself. Janaway asserts that for Schopenhauer it is in his discussion of the distinction between causality and freedom and the distinction between the empirical and intelligible characters that Kant comes closest to positively characterising the thing-in-itself as will.² He considers it a further legacy of Kant's influence that Schopenhauer accepts that there must be an ultimate, transempirical reality, and

¹ Janaway, *Self and World*, p. 85, and see *WWR* 1, p. 501(612).

² Janaway, *Self and World*, p. 96.

that it is non-causally related to the phenomena that make up the empirical world.¹

However, Janaway also notes a number of important divergences from Kant. The most obvious is that instead of being agnostic, as Kant is, regarding the nature of the thing-in-itself, Schopenhauer claims that it is will. Furthermore, Schopenhauer is prepared to use empirical evidence to support his claim to metaphysical knowledge of the thing-in-itself, a practice that Kant would certainly not have allowed. Another difference noted by Janaway is that whereas for Schopenhauer all of nature is will, for Kant only ourselves as subjects are will. As a final difference, Janaway notes the radically different meanings that Schopenhauer and Kant attach to the word *will*.²

Janaway states that for Schopenhauer the key to unlocking the nature of our own essence lies in the inner awareness of each subject. But since the subject is that which experiences but is itself never experienced, Janaway concludes that it cannot be identified with any individual item in the empirical world. Furthermore, the subject must be a mere detached observer of all objects, including its body, and this situation calls into question the admissibility of talking of 'its' body at all. Janaway contends that these are drawbacks not only because of the dubious conception of an entity identical with no part of the empirical world, but equally because it raises the issue of the subject's embodiment and its relationship with our ordinary cognitive contact with our bodies.³ He adds that Schopenhauer's strategy in dealing with this problem is to adopt a 'two-aspect' theory, in which knowledge of the body is given to the subject in two entirely different ways. In one way, it is given as representation to the understanding, and is an object among objects; in a second and very

¹ Ibid., p. 188.

² Ibid., pp. 188-89.

³ Ibid., pp. 189-90.

different way, it is given immediately, and is denoted by the word 'will'. Janaway asserts that according to Schopenhauer we know our bodies in this second way *when we act*, since bodily acts are identical with acts of the subject's will. Janaway, like Hamlyn, comments that Schopenhauer's insight into the link between willing and embodiment is one of his greatest achievements. Furthermore, he asserts that it is this link that provides Schopenhauer with the key to the mysterious thing-in-itself, since for Schopenhauer, if there is knowledge about oneself that is not a representation, this must be knowledge of the thing-in-itself.¹

Janaway next examines how the connection between willing and embodiment is supposed to bring us to such knowledge. He opens his discussion by asking how there can be knowledge about oneself that is not a representation, given Schopenhauer's representational theory of knowledge. He believes that Schopenhauer never really provides a satisfactory answer to this question, although it is clear that he recognises the difficulty. He also notes that it is possible to discern a progression in Schopenhauer's thought on this issue. He thinks that Schopenhauer's initial view, as presented in *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, is that awareness of one's will is a special instance of an object coming before the subject of representation; but there is no mention there of this being at the same time an awareness of the thing-in-itself. In the second volume of his main work, *The World as Will and Representation*, there appears the strong claim that in being aware of one's will one also has awareness in a non-representational way of the thing-in-itself. Janaway notes, however, that further on in the same volume Schopenhauer returns to the weaker view that cognition of one's own will is after all a representation, albeit one that is *sui generis* because it is

¹ Ibid., pp. 191-92.

relatively unmediated. He notes that Schopenhauer uses the veil metaphor to describe the limitation that the form of time imposes on our knowledge of the thing-in-itself. For even though our awareness of our inner selves is said to be free of the forms of space and causality, Schopenhauer acknowledges that it is still temporal. While Janaway accepts this last point, he believes that Schopenhauer's claim that the forms of space and causality are absent in self-awareness is problematical. For, according to Schopenhauer, acts of will are to be identified with movements of the body, and these are not only temporal, but also spatial and causal.¹

Janaway maintains that Schopenhauer seems in the end to concede that strictly speaking it is impossible to have knowledge of the will as thing-in-itself, and that to ask for such knowledge is to demand something contradictory. And in considering what can be said for Schopenhauer's claim that in inner experience of our own action we have the 'most immediate' access to the thing-in-itself, Janaway points out that if the thing-in-itself is unknowable, then in principle there can be no guarantee that a smaller number of subjective forms of the understanding brings us 'nearer' to the thing-in-itself than does a larger number. Consequently, he says that Schopenhauer's claim that in inner awareness we know the will as thing-in-itself seems to lack all legitimacy.² He argues that because Schopenhauer's claim that the essence of *all* nature is will rests on his claim that we know our own inner essence to be will, the undermining of the second claim also undermines the first. While Schopenhauer also provides a mass of empirical evidence to support his doctrine that all nature is embodied will, Janaway asserts that such evidence is

¹ Ibid., p. 196.

² Ibid., p. 197.

only meant as a corroboration of the metaphysical truth that Schopenhauer believes he has already established in his analysis of our knowledge of action.¹

Next, Janaway discusses the validity of using empirical data at all to confirm a hypothesis about a supposed metaphysical reality existing beyond all possible experience. He thinks that Schopenhauer's position on this point is somewhat ambiguous, in that he speaks of metaphysical knowledge that is not *a priori*, but is instead acquired by our understanding of inner and outer experience. Further, Janaway argues that such knowledge cannot be ordinary empirical knowledge since there cannot be ordinary knowledge of the thing-in-itself, and he cautions against the absurd claim that we acquire knowledge of the thing-in-itself by empirical means, while the knowledge is itself non-empirical, since the thing-in-itself by definition is empirically unknowable. He suggests instead that the only coherent interpretation of Schopenhauer's comments is that he thinks that we can best explain empirical data in terms of something that does not and could not itself appear among the data.²

Janaway's next task is to examine the relationship between the thing-in-itself and the supposedly relevant empirical data. He argues that Schopenhauer consistently denies a causal relationship between them and thus avoids Kant's error. However, concerning Schopenhauer's claim that the thing-in-itself 'objectifies itself' in empirical representations, Janaway maintains that the nature of this supposed relationship is obscure, since nothing is added to our understanding of empirical data by saying that they are objectifications of will. Nevertheless, he concedes that if we allow that there is a world in itself, then the relationship between it and the world as it appears to us must in principle remain obscure, and only a God's-eye view could straddle the divide between

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., pp. 198-99.

appearance and thing-in-itself. Despite this concession to Schopenhauer, Janaway argues that it is precisely because of the inherent obscurity of the connection between the thing-in-itself and the empirical world that there is no clear sense in which the empirical data can be explained in terms of an underlying will.¹

Finally, Janaway looks at Schopenhauer's identification of the thing-in-itself as will within the historical background of his time, pointing to a similarity between Schopenhauer and Schelling in that they both try to go beyond the subject-object differentiation to a metaphysical realm where a pivotal One, conceived in some way as acting or willing, is discovered. He concludes by saying that, despite its obscurity, Schopenhauer's theory of knowledge of the thing-in-itself is intelligible when viewed in its historical setting.²

This completes my overview of comments from those who follow what I call the traditional interpretation, according to which Schopenhauer claims that Kant's thing-in-itself is will. It is clear that this interpretation presents the reader with seemingly inconsistent doctrines. On the one hand Schopenhauer claims that we know the thing-in-itself as will, on the other hand he seems committed to the view that nothing can be said or known about the thing-in-itself.

To bring out more clearly what is entailed by the traditional interpretation I now move on to survey the views of those commentators who acknowledge that Schopenhauer identifies the thing-in-itself as will, but who maintain that he only ever intends this identity to be a qualified one.

¹ Ibid., pp. 199-200.

² Ibid., pp. 204-7.

George Simmel, in his book *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, says that despite the seemingly literal claim of identity entailed in Schopenhauer's assertion that the thing-in-itself is will, it is a prevalent misunderstanding to interpret his claim in this way. Instead, he believes, Schopenhauer calls the thing-in-itself will because in introspective awareness of our own will we come closest to experiencing the thing-in-itself. He argues that for Schopenhauer the will in ourselves is not the thing-in-itself, but is rather the least veiled appearance of the thing-in-itself in phenomenal form.¹ Simmel holds that Schopenhauer appeals to the feeling of existence, to justify his assertion that in self-consciousness we come close to an awareness of the thing-in-itself.² However, he asserts that, for Schopenhauer, this tangible physical fact of experience approaches but never touches that intangible absolute.³

Radoslav Tsanoff, in his doctoral thesis entitled *Schopenhauer's Criticism of Kant's Theory of Experience*, notes that Schopenhauer considers his own great achievement to be that of completing Kant's idealism by identifying the thing-in-itself as will. However, he also notes that Schopenhauer recognises that our awareness of will is always in time; time being a necessary presupposition of consciousness. Tsanoff concludes that while Schopenhauer thinks that our willing consciousness affords us the first direct hint as to what the inner nature of reality may be, he is just as agnostic about the ultimate being of the thing-in-itself as was Kant. For the veil of time always stands between the thing-in-itself and the self-conscious agent.⁴

¹ Georg Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, trans. Helmut Loiskandl, Deena Weinstein and Michael Weinstein (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), pp. 33-34.

² Ibid., pp. 26-27.

³ Ibid., p. 34.

⁴ Radoslav A. Tsanoff, *Schopenhauer's Criticism of Kant's Theory of Experience* (New York: Longman, Green & Company, 1911), pp. 66-70.

Thomas Whittaker, in his book *Reason*, says that for Schopenhauer the will alone is the thing-in-itself. However, he also notes that the thing-in-itself is so named because it is the clearest, the most perfect and the most immediate manifestation of the will illuminated by knowledge.¹ Furthermore, he notes that according to Schopenhauer, though the will is the nearest we can get to the thing-in-itself, it is in truth a partially phenomenalised expression of this.²

Arthur Hübscher in his book *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer in its Intellectual Context, Thinker Against the Tide*, argues that for Schopenhauer the will is Kant's thing-in-itself,³ and his view is that the will is not meant to explain how the world comes into being, but rather what it is.⁴ He makes the further point that the concept of will, as employed by Schopenhauer, has a much more comprehensive meaning than it does in modern psychology, and that this broader concept enables Schopenhauer to be the first to answer such questions as the following. What is the nature of the will? How does it come to represent itself in multiplicity? How does it objectify itself in an ascending order of stages of appearances from the blind dull urge in the forces of nature to its highest level of manifestation, human beings, in whom it becomes fully conscious of itself?⁵

While allowing that Schopenhauer's will is Kant's thing-in-itself, Hübscher notes that Kant would not have approved of the move in which Schopenhauer takes the Kantian insight that the subject in its profoundest nature is will as a springboard to the claim that the entire world in its innermost nature is will.

¹ Thomas Whittaker, *Reason, A Philosophical Essay with Historical Illustrations (Comte and Mill, Schopenhauer, Vico, Spinoza)* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1934), p. 98.

² *Ibid.*, p. 120.

³ Arthur Hübscher, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer in its Intellectual Context, Thinker Against the Tide*, trans. Joachim T. Baer and David E. Cartwright (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), p. 201.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 202-3.

But Hübscher thinks that this insight is what has given Schopenhauer's achievement its great and lasting significance. However, he also contends that for Schopenhauer the will is the thing-in-itself only in a relative sense; that is, relative to the world of appearance.¹ In so far as the thing-in-itself can be grasped somehow by knowledge, it is will, but the question of what the thing-in-itself might be in itself, independent of its appearance as will is a question that can never be answered.²

According to Hübscher, once Schopenhauer attains this insight 'there is no further development in his world view, no inner struggles and changes, no transformation, no critical reassessment of the fundamental thoughts.' He asserts that although in the works published after the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* there is expansion, observation and testing of the structure of the system, everything points back to the first volume.³ He rejects the claim that Schopenhauer's identification of the will with the thing-in-itself is expressed in a more qualified way in the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation* than in the first. Instead, Hübscher asserts that already in the first volume it is clear that Schopenhauer believes that we cannot know the will as thing-in-itself in its essential nature, but only in its manifestations in space and time. He says that the 'critical qualifications' are present in the work proper, in the early manuscript books and in the Berlin lectures.⁴

Furthermore, Hübscher rejects all other alleged shifts and contradictions that have been suggested by many commentators. He asserts that invariably such criticism stems from a failure to distinguish between the different points of

¹ Ibid., p. 383.

² Ibid., p. 214.

³ Ibid., p. 215.

⁴ Ibid., p. 220.

view that Schopenhauer adopts in his discussions. These include the epistemological, the physiological, the logical and the psychological viewpoints. Hübscher also asserts that in passing from the sphere of representation to the sphere of the thing-in-itself we must recognise that language presents a problem. For all our words and concepts are unavoidably tied to the sphere of representation. Consequently, he suggests that the language that Schopenhauer uses to express metaphysical insights can only be in the manner of suggestion and parable.¹

In Hübscher's final chapter, his approval of Schopenhauer's philosophy is evident in the following passage.

It remains without doubt that the method of comparative analysis has turned out to be productive, in spite of all the superficiality with which it has occasionally been applied. And yet, no one will succeed in explaining Schopenhauer's world view either as the result of literary or contemporary influences, nor, on the other hand, to assign it a place in chronological terms as the result of new insights. The comparison with other modes of thought and system structures of the old and new period cannot but have the result of showing the peculiarity and individual worth of his doctrine in a better light.²

This completes my overview of those who acknowledge that Schopenhauer identifies the thing-in-itself as will, but who maintain that he only ever intends this identity to be a qualified one.³ I shall postpone my assessment of the

¹ Ibid., pp. 380-81.

² Ibid., p. 406.

³ Other commentators, writing in recent journal articles, who also adopt this view include James Chansky, 'The Conscious Body: Schopenhauer's difference from Fichte in relation to Kant', *International Studies in Philosophy* XXIV, 3 (1992), p. 38, and Dale E. Snow and James J. Snow, 'Was Schopenhauer an Idealist?', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 29, 4 (1991), p. 646, p. 649.

plausibility of this interpretation to the next chapter, in which I look at a range of interpretations that I believe can be extracted from Schopenhauer's writings. My aim in that chapter is to make clearer the alternatives that are available in trying to make Schopenhauer consistent, my strategy being to assess each interpretation in the light of his central epistemological, metaphysical and conceptual doctrines.

CHAPTER 2

MULTIPLE INTERPRETATIONS OF SCHOPENHAUER'S CLAIM THAT THE THING-IN-ITSELF IS WILL

Schopenhauer asserts numerous times throughout his writings that the thing-in-itself is will, and the traditional interpretation accepts that he intends this assertion to be a straightforward claim of identity. However, this is not the only way of interpreting his fundamental metaphysical claim, and in this chapter I shall show that there are at least six interpretations of his claim that the thing-in-itself is will. Further, I shall show later on that the pervasive influence of both Kant and Eastern thought on Schopenhauer's metaphysics, epistemology, and conceptual doctrines is one of the important factors in explaining how the possibility of multiple interpretations arises.¹

I shall begin by outlining and presenting textual evidence for the six interpretations and shall then consider what conclusions can be drawn from this analysis.

1

Interpretation 1. *The thing-in-itself is identical with the will.*²

1 In this chapter I indicate some ways in which the influence of Kant and Eastern thought shows itself in Schopenhauer's philosophy, and in Appendices 1 and 3 I present more detailed argument supporting the claims that I make.

2 I think that in the passages that support Interpretation 1 Schopenhauer's meaning is that the thing-in-itself is both qualitatively the same as the will, and the very same thing as the will. While I would normally call this 'qualitative and numerical identity', in this case such terminology is inappropriate: for the thing-in-itself is non-spatial and non-temporal, and therefore its relationship to the will cannot (strictly speaking) be described in terms that presuppose spatial and temporal definition. Consequently, I simply refer to the relationship between them as one of 'identity'.

For example:

This *thing-in-itself*, this substratum of all phenomena, and therefore of the whole of Nature, is nothing but what we know directly and intimately and find within ourselves as *the will*.¹

What this amounts to metaphysically is that the reality underlying the world of representation is the thing-in-itself, and that the thing-in-itself is identical with the will. The epistemological significance is that, if Schopenhauer is right, we are able to directly intuit the nature of the thing-in-itself and we find it to be

1 *WN*, p. 216(202): as other examples see *WWR* 1, p. 110(155), p. 112(157), p. 113(158), p. 119(165), p. 120(166), p. 128(175), p. 135(184), p. 153(205), p. 154(206), p. 155(208), p. 158(211), p. 162(215), p. 170(222), p. 174(227), p. 175(228), p. 181(235), p. 184(238), p. 275(347), p. 280(353), p. 282(356), p. 286(361), p. 287(361), p. 288(363), p. 289(364), p. 290(365), p. 292(367), p. 301(378), p. 328(410), p. 354(441), p. 366(455), p. 402(497), p. 421(519), p. 436(536), p. 474(580), p. 501(612), p. 503(614), p. 504(615), pp. 504-05(616), p. 506(618), p. 534(650); *WWR* 2, p. 14(23), p. 16(24), p. 18(27), p. 136(158-59), p. 174(203), p. 201(234), p. 206(240), p. 214(249), p. 239(280), p. 245(286), p. 259(302), p. 299(349), p. 307(359), p. 308(360), p. 309(361), p. 313(367), p. 320(374), p. 322(377), p. 335(393), p. 348(408), p. 443(521), p. 472(553), p. 484(568), p. 497(583), p. 501(587), p. 530(620), p. 579(678), p. 589(690), p. 600(703), p. 601(705); *WN*, p. 237(220), p. 252(233), p. 345(310); *PP* 1, p. 20(29), p. 78(92), p. 229(251), p. 267(290), p. 299(325), p. 303(328), p. 305(331); *PP* 2, p. 46(55), p. 48(56), p. 90(102), p. 94(107), p. 95(107), p. 176(192), p. 312(339), p. 313(340), p. 383(423), p. 599(651); *FW*, p. 34(72), p. 97(137); *MSR* 1, p. 184(169), p. 205(187), p. 206(188), p. 319(291), p. 488(440), p. 491(444); *MSR* 2, p. 463(399), p. 485(419), p. 486(419); *MSR* 3, p. 84(75), p. 121(110), p. 164(149), p. 197(180), p. 227(207), p. 245(224), pp. 247-48(226), p. 365(333), p. 572(525); *MSR* 4, p. 110(88), p. 139(116), p. 211(184), p. 217(189), p. 223(194).

will. This, of course, is the traditional interpretation, which I outlined in Chapter 1.¹

Interpretation 2. *The thing-in-itself is not just will but will to live.*

For example:

For, the thing-in-itself, the will-to-live, exists whole and undivided in every being, even in the tiniest.²

In five of the twelve passages that I have found to support this interpretation, it is clear that Schopenhauer uses the terms 'will' and 'will-to-live' interchangeably.³ Although this might suggest that Interpretation 2 is no different from Interpretation 1, I think that it is worth considering it as a distinct variant of the first interpretation rather than simply equivalent to it, since the term 'will-to-live' stresses the functional aspect of the will, a feature that is important for Schopenhauer's views on teleology. For example:

We recognise in those lowest natural forces themselves that same will, which has its first manifestation in them. Already striving towards its

1 Although in only seven of the over one hundred and fifteen passages that support Interpretation 1 does Schopenhauer explicitly assert that our means of knowing that the thing-in-itself is identical with the will is through a direct awareness in self-consciousness, I have assumed that this is the epistemological import of all of the passages mentioned. I think that this is reasonable given the unequivocal manner in which both the claim of identity and the claim of direct awareness are stated. The seven passages are *WWR* 2, p. 600(703); *WWR* 1, p. 162(215), p. 436(536), p. 503(614), p. 504(615); *WN*, p. 216(202), p. 345(310). A further point to recommend this assumption is that there are many less explicit passages throughout Schopenhauer's works suggesting that our direct awareness of our will in self-consciousness provides the key to understanding ourselves and the whole of nature. (For a good example of such a passage see *WWR* 2, p. 179(209). See also *WWR* 2, p. 195(228), p. 313(367), p. 364(433); *WWR* 1, p. 288(363), p. 290(365); *FFR*, pp. 119-20(99)). While at times Schopenhauer also suggests that his claim that the thing-in-itself is will has the status of a hypothesis that is confirmed by its ability to solve the innumerable contradictions in the phenomenal world, this is not his main argument in support of that claim (see *WWR* 2, pp. 182-85(213-17); *PP* 1, p. 42(54)). It can, I think, be interpreted either as an ancillary argument providing additional support for what is established by direct inner experience, or as a claim supporting Interpretation 4.

2 *PP* 2, p. 221(241). See also *PP* 2, p. 283(307); *WWR* 2, pp. 484-85(568); p. 550(644), p. 559(656), p. 579(678); *WWR* 1, p. 279(352), p. 370(460), p. 399(493), p. 400(495); *MSR* 3, p. 565(518), p. 584(536).

3 *WWR* 2, p. 484(568), p. 579(678); *WWR* 1, p. 279(352), p. 399(493), p. 400(495).

goal in this manifestation and through its original laws themselves, the will works towards its final aim; and therefore everything that happens according to blind laws of nature must serve and be in keeping with this aim. Indeed, it cannot turn out otherwise, in so far as everything material is nothing but the phenomenon, the visibility, the objectivity of the will-to-live, which is one.¹

Although Interpretation 2 asserts that the thing-in-itself is will-to live, it does not deny that it is fundamentally will. Rather, it stresses the manner in which the will as thing-in-itself manifests itself in the phenomenal world.

The epistemological significance of the passages supporting Interpretation 2 is complex. In those passages where Schopenhauer says that in self-consciousness we are directly aware of the will he always uses the term 'will' rather than 'will-to-live'.² Furthermore, he does not include will-to-live in the list of mental items that he subsumes under the generic term 'will'.³ How then does he justify his claim to know that the thing-in-itself is the will-to-live, if such knowledge is not available through introspective awareness? I think that he does so by appealing to empirical evidence of another kind. He thinks that observation of the external phenomenal world provides support for this claim. For example:

¹ *WWR* 2, p. 324(379-80). While I acknowledge that in only five of the twelve passages that I have found to support Interpretation 2 does Schopenhauer's discuss his claim that the thing-in-itself is the 'will-to-live' in the context of his views on teleology, I think that this is sufficient evidence to justify the distinction that I am making between Interpretations 1 and 2. The five passages are *WWR* 2, pp. 484-85(568), p. 550(644), p. 559(656); *WWR* 1, p. 399(493), p. 400(495).

² See *WWR* 2, p. 600(703). See also *WWR* 1, p. 162(215), p. 436(536), p. 503(614), p. 504(615); *WN*, p. 216(202), p. 345(310).

³ See *WWR* 2, p. 202(235), where Schopenhauer asserts that 'For not only willing and deciding in the narrowest sense, but also all striving, wishing, shunning, hoping, fearing, loving, hating, in short all that directly constitutes our own weal and woe, desire and disinclination, is obviously only affection of the will, is a stirring, a modification, of willing and not-willing, is just that which, when it operates outwards, exhibits itself as an act of will proper.'

Every glance at the world, to explain which is the task of the philosopher, confirms and establishes that the *will-to-live*, far from being an arbitrary hypostasis or even an empty expression, is the only true description of the world's innermost nature.¹

In brief, the epistemological significance of the passages supporting Interpretation 2 is that our knowledge that the thing-in-itself is the will-to-live is based upon observation of the external phenomenal world rather than upon introspective awareness of our inner non-phenomenal nature.

Interpretation 3. *While the thing-in-itself is will, it also has other aspects.*

Support for this interpretation comes from passages in which Schopenhauer discusses the experiences of those in whom the will has been abolished, and he includes the mystics in this category. For their experiences suggest that with denial of the will they become aware of a reality other than will. For example:

Accordingly, even after this last and extreme step, the question may still be raised what that will, which manifests itself in the world and as the world, is ultimately and absolutely in itself; in other words, what it is, quite apart from the fact that it manifests itself as *will*, or in general *appears*, that is to say, *is known* in general. This question can *never* be answered, because, as I have said, being-known of itself contradicts being-in-itself, and everything that is known is as such only phenomenon. But the possibility of this question shows that the thing-in-itself, which we know most immediately in the will, may have, entirely outside all possible phenomenon, determinations, qualities, and modes of existence which for us are absolutely unknowable and incomprehensible, and which then remain as the

¹ WWR 2 p. 350(410). See also *On the Will in Nature*, *passim*.

inner nature of the thing-in-itself, when this, as explained in the fourth book, has freely abolished itself as *will*, has thus stepped out of the phenomenon entirely, and as regards our knowledge, that is to say as regards the world of phenomena, has passed over into empty nothingness. If the will were positively and absolutely the thing-in-itself, then this nothing would be *absolute*, instead of which it expressly appears to us there only as a *relative* nothing.¹

An analysis of this passage clearly reveals that, according to Schopenhauer, while the thing-in-itself is will, it also has other aspects. That at least one of its aspects is will is made clear by several assertions that he makes, the first of which is his claim that the will 'manifests itself in the world and as the world' (*sich in der Welt und als die Welt darstellt*), a phrase implying that the will is different from the phenomenal world in which it is manifested. The second is his assertion that the thing-in-itself freely abolishes itself as will, a comment implying that prior to this abolition the thing-in-itself *is* will. Finally, though perhaps more ambiguously, when Schopenhauer alleges that the will is not 'positively and absolutely the thing-in-itself' he implies that the latter *is* will in at least one of its aspects.

That the thing-in-itself may have other aspects is both implied by Schopenhauer's assertion that the will is not 'absolutely and positively the thing-in-itself', and made more explicit in his comment that 'the thing-in-itself, which we know most immediately in the will, may have, entirely outside all possible phenomenon, determinations, qualities, and modes of existence which for us are absolutely unknowable and incomprehensible'. And the final

1 *WWR* 2, p. 198(231). See also *WWR* 2, p. 560(656), p. 644(754); *PP* 2, p. 312(339). I believe that Interpretation 3 is also supported, though less explicitly, by the following passages: *WWR* 2, p. 288(338), p. 294(343), p. 642(753); *MSR* 3, p. 79(70); *WWR* 1, p. 405(500), p. 411(507). However, I leave a discussion of this claim to Section 5 of this chapter.

sentence of the passage, which reads 'if the will were positively and absolutely the thing-in-itself, then this nothing [after the will has abolished itself] would be *absolute*, instead of which it expressly appears to us there only as a *relative* nothing'¹, is confirmation that, according to Schopenhauer, the thing-in-itself is both will and something else.

The epistemological significance of the above passage is that the form of awareness revealing that the thing-in-itself is will is different from the form of awareness revealing the other aspects of the thing-in-itself. Schopenhauer believes that while the former kind of awareness is experienced by all of us when we introspect, the latter is only experienced by those, such as the mystics, who have denied the will.² Although his assertion that 'being-known of itself contradicts being-in-itself' suggests that he thinks that nothing can be known about the thing-in-itself, I think that here he is referring only to the impossibility of *representational* knowledge of it. For in other passages he appeals to another form of knowledge, which he calls 'feeling', to justify his knowledge claims about the thing-in-itself. In ordinary self-consciousness we 'know', through feeling, the thing-in-itself as will, and the mystic 'knows', through a transformed awareness, its other properties.³

1 Schopenhauer insists that the concept of *nothing* is essentially relative, and always refers to a definite thing that it negates (*WWR* 1, p. 409(504-5)). Consequently, after denial of the will, the thing-in-itself is only nothing relative to the world as will that we know directly in immediate self-consciousness and indirectly in perception of the phenomenal world. Furthermore, relative to the aspects of the thing-in-itself that are the objects of mystical awareness, the world of will is nothing. (See also *WWR* 2, pp. 497-98(583), p. 508(596), p. 608(712), p. 612(716); *MSR* 1, pp. 36-37(34-35)).

2 This raises the following question. After denial of the will what is meant by an experiencing *subject*? While Schopenhauer wrestled with this question, he admits that he is unable to provide a definitive answer (See *WWR* 2, p. 275(322), p. 641(751); *PP* 2, p. 227(248)). However, it is worth noting that similar difficulties are acknowledged by others who, like Schopenhauer, are interested in mysticism (See Walter Stace 'The Nature of Mysticism', in *Philosophy of Religion*, eds. William L. Rowe and William J. Wainwright (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), pp. 270-75).

3 While these claims are clearly important, I leave a discussion of them to Chapter 7, where I argue for the importance of the role of feeling in Schopenhauer's epistemology, particularly in relation to his justification for claiming knowledge of the thing-in-itself.

Interpretation 4. *The nature of the thing-in-itself is unknown, but it can be called will in the qualified sense that the will stands nearest to the thing-in-itself.*

In self-conscious awareness the thing-in-itself reveals itself as *will*, or *acts of will*. Since in this kind of awareness only the form of time is present, we here come closest to a direct awareness of the thing-in-itself. Consequently, although it does not completely reveal itself in self-conscious awareness, it nevertheless *manifests, appears, or exhibits* itself under the *fewest number of phenomenal forms*; or as Schopenhauer sometimes asserts, under the *lightest of veils*. Consider the following passage:

If, in order to penetrate into the essence of things, we leave what is given only indirectly and from outside, and stick to the only phenomenon into whose inner nature an immediate insight is accessible to us from within, we quite definitely find in this the will as the ultimate thing and the kernel of reality. In the will, therefore, we recognise the thing-in-itself in so far as it no longer has space, but time for its form; *consequently, we really know it only in its most immediate manifestation, and thus with the reservation that this knowledge of it is still not exhaustive and entirely adequate*. In this sense, therefore, we here retain the concept of the will as that of the thing-in-itself.¹

At first sight the metaphysical significance of this passage seems ambiguous. While in both the above passage and in those mentioned in the footnotes Schopenhauer suggests that the thing-in-itself is will, he does so with the

1 *WWR* 2, pp. 494-95(580) (italics mine). See also *WWR* 2, p. 182(213), p. 185(216-17), pp. 196-97(229-30), p. 197(230), pp. 197-98(231), p. 318(372), p. 496(581), p. 612(716); *PP* 1, p. 42(54); *MSR* 3, pp. 40-41(36-37), p. 114(103), p. 171(155), p. 353(321-22), p. 472(432), p. 595(546), p. 713(657), p. 716(660); *MSR* 4, pp. 296-97(261).

qualification that it is will only as manifested in phenomena, and that therefore it is will only conditionally. But to say this is to tacitly admit that the thing-in-itself is not will, or at the very least to admit that it is not known to be will. This is in obvious contrast to the previous interpretations, the first of which asserts that the thing-in-itself is will, the second of which asserts that it is will-to-live, and the third of which asserts that it is will in at least one of its aspects. The epistemological implication of the passages supporting Interpretation 4 is that our knowledge of the thing-in-itself is mediated by the phenomenal form of time, and is therefore not a direct awareness of it.

Interpretation 5. *The thing-in-itself can be described as will, but only in a metaphorical sense.*

This interpretation differs from the previous interpretations, all of which are non-metaphorical in their assertions. For example:

The will as thing-in-itself is entire and undivided in every being, just as the centre is an integral part of every radius; whereas the peripheral end of this radius is in the most rapid revolution with the surface that represents time and its content, the other end at the centre where eternity lies, remains in profoundest peace, because the centre is the point whose rising half is no different from the sinking half. Therefore, it is said also in the Bhagavad-Gita: Undivided it dwells in beings, and yet as it were divided; it is to be known as the sustainer, annihilator, and producer of beings. *Here, of course, we fall into mystical and metaphorical language, but it is the only language in which anything can be said about this wholly transcendent theme.*¹

¹ WWR 2, pp. 325-26(381) (italics mine). See also WWR 2, p. 325(380); MSR 1, pp. 36-37(34-35); MSR 4, p. 35(23); WWR 1, pp. 110-11(155), p. 410(506).

The significance of the passages supporting this interpretation is that the content of self-conscious awareness cannot be described literally. For apart from those that are a priori, all concepts capable of describing the content of reality are abstracted from the phenomenal world,¹ and can therefore have no direct application to the thing-in-itself.²

Interpretation 6. *The will is the metaphysical underpinning of the phenomenal world, constituting a realm that is distinct both from the world of phenomena and from the thing-in-itself.*

The will is the *in-itself* or the *kernel* of the world of phenomena, but is distinct from the thing-in-itself. I take this to be the interpretation favoured by Julian Young in his book *Willing and Unwilling: A Study in the Philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer*. In support of his interpretation Young quotes from the following passage.

I therefore say that the solution of the riddle of the world must proceed from the understanding of the world itself; that thus the task of metaphysics is not to pass beyond the experience in which the world exists, but to understand it thoroughly, because outer and inner experience is at any rate the principal source of knowledge; that therefore the solution of the riddle of the world is only possible through the proper connection of outer with inner experience, effected at the right point, and the combination thereby produced of these two very heterogeneous sources of knowledge. Yet this solution is *only possible within certain limits which are inseparable from our finite nature*, so that we attain to a right understanding of the world itself without reaching a final explanation of its existence abolishing all

¹ *WWR* 1, pp. 50-51(86-87).

² Of course concepts that are a priori also have application only to the phenomenal world.

further problems. Therefore, *est quadam prodire tenus* (it is possible to go some way, even if it is not possible to go further),¹ and *my path lies midway between the omniscience of the earlier dogmatists and the despair of the Kantian Critique*.²

Young thinks that in this passage Schopenhauer affirms his commitment to the fundamental Kantian position that nothing can be known beyond experience and its possibility. He thinks that Schopenhauer's claim that we can 'attain to a right understanding of the world itself' refers to the possibility of completing the scientific image of the world within a naturalistic framework. On Young's interpretation this framework includes the metaphysical will, but excludes the thing-in-itself. Accordingly, he interprets Schopenhauer's assertion that 'my path lies midway between the omniscience of the earlier dogmatists and the despair of the Kantian Critique' to mean that while Schopenhauer agrees with Kant's assertion that earlier philosophers were wrong to claim knowledge of ultimate reality, he disagrees with Kant's assertion that metaphysics is impossible. Instead, Young thinks that Schopenhauer is saying that metaphysics *is* possible, but that it concerns the will as the esoteric underpinning of the phenomenal world, and not ultimate reality or the thing-in-itself.

1 Payne translates the Latin expression '*est quadam prodire tenus*' as, 'It is right to go up to the boundary (if there is no path beyond)', but the original reference from Horace, *Epistles*, 1, 1, 32 translates more faithfully as 'It is possible to go some way, even if it is not possible to go further.' In the context of Schopenhauer's work, the latter translation seems the better of the two, since earlier in the same paragraph Schopenhauer speaks in terms of what is possible (*möglich*) rather than what is right.

2 *WWI* 2, p. 20 or see *WWR* 1, p. 428(526) for Payne's translation. For Young's reference to the above passage see *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 33. In the above passage I have italicised those sentences that Young quotes. My reason for not simply presenting them in isolation is that in Young's book they are embedded within his commentary. Other passages that Young quotes in support of his interpretation include *WWR* 2, p. 172(201), p. 182(213), p. 183(214), p. 185(216-17), pp. 196-97(229-30), pp. 197-98(231), p. 198(231), p. 349(408), p. 612(716); *WWR* 1, p. xv(10-11), pp. 81-82(122-23), p. 426(524); *WN*, p. 376(340); *PP* 1, p. 42(54); *PP* 2, pp. 9-11(15-18).

In brief, Interpretation 6 asserts that there are three tiers to reality; thing-in-itself, will, and phenomena. Though the reality of the thing-in-itself is assumed, no description of its nature is given, and the realm of metaphysical enquiry concerns the will, not the thing-in-itself. Accordingly, while knowledge of the metaphysical is possible, this also is of the will and not of the thing-in-itself. No knowledge of the latter is possible.¹

2

Before assessing the six interpretations outlined in Section 1, I wish to mention a general difficulty that confronts any attempt to favour one or more of the interpretations of Schopenhauer's claim that the thing-in-itself is will. The difficulty is that there is evidence to suggest that Schopenhauer himself is uncertain as to how he wants this claim to be interpreted.

In the first of the following two passages from *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer appears to use the concept of will as a *metaphor* to describe the thing-in-itself. However, in the second, which occurs a mere two pages later, he appears to assert that the concept of will has a *literal* application to the thing-in-itself.

Now, if this *thing-in-itself* (we will still retain the Kantian expression as a standing formula) – which as such is never object, since all object is its mere appearance or phenomenon, and not it itself – is to be thought of objectively, then we must borrow its name and concept from an object, from something in some way objectively given, and therefore from one of its phenomena. But in order to serve as a point of explanation, this can be none other than the most complete of all its

1 Although Young acknowledges that Schopenhauer admits the possibility of 'experiential access to ultimate reality', he also notes that for Schopenhauer such incommunicable knowledge cannot be the subject of philosophical study (Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 34).

phenomena, i.e., the most distinct, the most developed, the most directly enlightened by knowledge; but this is precisely man's *will*.¹

On the other hand, the concept of *will* is of all possible concepts the only one that has its origin *not* in the phenomenon, *not* in the mere representation of perception, but which comes from within, and proceeds from the immediate consciousness of everyone.²

Another example of Schopenhauer's vacillation concerning the way in which he wants his claim, the thing-in-itself is will, to be interpreted occurs in the following passages where he appears unsure whether the knowledge that we have of our own willing is or is not of the thing-in-itself. He quotes Kant as saying, 'All concepts which do not have as their basis a perception in space and time (sensuous perception), or in other words have not been drawn from such a perception, are absolutely empty, that is to say, they give us no knowledge. But as perception can furnish only *phenomena*, not things-in-themselves, we too have absolutely no knowledge of things-in-themselves.'³ He then goes on without interruption to say :

I admit this of everything, but not of the knowledge everyone has of his own willing. This is *neither a perception (eine Anschauung)* (for all perception is spatial), nor is it empty. . . In fact our *willing* is the only opportunity we have of understanding simultaneously from within any event that outwardly manifests itself; consequently, it is the one thing known to us *immediately*, and not given to us merely in the representation (*in der Vorstellung*), as all else is.⁴

1 WWR 1, p. 110(155).

2 WWR 1, p. 112(156-57).

3 WWR 2, p. 196(229).

4 WWR 2, p. 196(229). Magee, 'Misunderstanding Schopenhauer', pp. 11-12, asserts that the alleged difficulty in these passages arises through a misunderstanding of the text. The crucial word is 'this' in the first line of the first passage. Magee says that 'this' refers 'not to the impossibility of knowledge of things-in-themselves but to the emptiness of all concepts

But at the bottom of the same page he suggests that the knowledge that introspection yields is of phenomena.

Meanwhile it is to be carefully noted, and I have always kept it in mind, that even the inward observation (*die innere Wahrnehmung*) we have of our own will still does not by any means furnish an exhaustive and adequate knowledge of the thing-in-itself . . . In the first place, such knowledge is tied to the form of the representation (*der Vorstellung*); it is perception or observation (*Wahrnehmung*) and as such falls into subject and object.¹

A third example relates to Schopenhauer's general uncertainty about the value of concepts that do not originate in perception. In one passage he stresses that concepts that do not have their origin in perception are *mere words*. However, in another passage, which forms part of the same chapter, he says that although such concepts can never be the starting point of philosophy, they may nevertheless be admitted as *half-knowledge* when we have reached the limits of human knowledge. This comment is particularly puzzling given that Schopenhauer sometimes explicitly claims that our knowledge of our own will is not a perception,² and yet he also frequently says that it is the most real knowledge possible to us and the basis upon which our understanding of the rest of reality is to be based.³ In other words,

not based on spatio-temporal perceptions'. He believes that the immediately following text shows this to be the correct interpretation, since it refers only to knowledge of phenomena. However, I am unconvinced of this, since I think that the immediately following text could just as plausibly be interpreted as referring to knowledge of both phenomena and thing-in-itself. Nevertheless, in fairness to Magee, I concede that the entire passage, and especially the word 'this', referred to earlier, is ambiguous, and therefore open to more than one interpretation.

See also *WWR* 2, p. 247(289) where Schopenhauer asserts that, 'accordingly the knowledge of the will in self-consciousness is not a perception of it, but an absolutely immediate awareness of its successive impulses or stirrings.'

1 *WWR* 2, pp. 196-97(229-30), (italics mine).

2 *WWR* 1, pp. 103-5(146-49). See also *WWR* 1, p. 112(156-57); *WWR* 2, p. 196(229), p. 247(289).

3 *WWR* 2, p. 196(229), p. 293(343), p. 318(372-73), p. 351(411), p. 643(753).

contrary to his own teaching, Schopenhauer *does* start his philosophy from a concept that does not originate in perception.

It has been shown that concepts borrow their material from knowledge of perception, and that therefore the whole structure of our world of thought rests on the world of perceptions. It must therefore be possible for us to go back from every concept, even if through intermediate stages, to the perceptions from which it has itself been directly drawn, or from which have been drawn the concepts of which it is in turn an abstraction. In other words, it must be possible for us to verify the concept with perceptions that stand to abstractions in the relation of examples. Therefore these perceptions furnish us with the real content of all our thinking, and wherever they are missing we have had in our heads not concepts, but mere words.¹

Now if, in accordance with all that has been said here, wide, abstract concepts, and in particular those that are not to be realised in any perception, can never be the source of knowledge, the starting-point or the proper material of philosophising, nevertheless particular results of philosophy can occasionally so turn out that they can be thought merely in the abstract, but cannot be verified by any perception.² *Knowledge of this kind will, of course, be only half-knowledge*; it indicates, so to speak, only the place where that which is to be known is found; this itself remains concealed. We should

1 WWR 2, p. 71(85-86). See also WWR 2, p. 77(92), p. 192(224-25), p. 286(335-36), p. 484(568), pp. 493-95(578-80), p. 609(712-13); WWR 1, p. 62(100), p. 65(104), p. 475(582).

2 While it is not entirely clear whether Schopenhauer is implying that such concepts have their origin in something other than perception, or whether he means that such concepts are mere abstractions with no cash-value either in perception or anything else, the example that he proceeds to give suggests the former interpretation. For it seems indirectly to refer to the concept of 'will' (as thing-in-itself), a concept that Schopenhauer speaks of in at least one instance as having its origin in introspective awareness (WWR 1, p. 112 (156-57)).

therefore be satisfied with such concepts only in the extreme case, and when we have reached the limit of the knowledge possible to our faculties. An example of this kind might possibly be the concept of an existence or being out of time, such as the proposition (*desgleichen der Satz*):¹ The indestructibility of our true nature by death is not a continued existence of it. With concepts of this sort, *the firm ground that supports the whole of our knowledge trembles*, as it were.²

1 While both Payne and Haldane and Kemp (*WWI*, 2, p. 263) translate *desgleichen der Satz* as, 'such as the proposition', this translation implausibly suggests that Schopenhauer equates 'concepts' with 'propositions'. It may therefore be better to translate the phrase more liberally as, 'as in the proposition'. I am indebted to John Atwell for this suggestion.

2 *WWR* 2, p. 85(102), (italics mine). Two further examples follow, but in these I compare passages that are taken from different volumes of *The World as Will and Representation*. While this means that the contrasting passages are written in different periods and are set in different contexts, I think that for two reasons, it is nevertheless useful to include them. First, both are relevant to the attempt to understand how Schopenhauer wants his claim, the thing-in-itself is will, to be interpreted; and second, in both examples Schopenhauer expresses his views in a more qualified and hesitant manner in the second volume than he does in the first. The first example concerns his claim that in self-consciousness our awareness of the will as thing-in-itself is immediate and distinct. He says:

I have demonstrated it [the thing-in-itself] directly, where it immediately lies, namely in the will that reveals itself to everyone immediately as the in-itself of his own phenomenon (*WWR* 1, p. 503(614)).

In consciousness everyone recognises himself at once as the will which as thing-in-itself, has not the principle of sufficient reason for its form, and itself depends on nothing, but rather everything else depends on it (*WWR* 1, p. 504(615-16)). See also *WWR* 1, p. 288(362)).

In marked contrast to the above passages where Schopenhauer claims that in self-consciousness we have an immediate awareness of the will as thing-in-itself, his claims are much more qualified in the following two passages.

Our inner nature has its root in what is no longer phenomenon but thing-in-itself, to which therefore the forms of the phenomenon do not reach; and in this way, the chief conditions of individuality are wanting, and distinct consciousness ceases therewith (*WWR* 2, p. 325(380)).

If, in spite of this essential limitation of the intellect, it becomes possible in a roundabout way, by means of widely pursued reflection and by the ingenious connection of outwardly directed objective knowledge with the data of self-consciousness, to arrive at a certain understanding of the world and the inner essence of things, this will nevertheless be only a very limited, entirely indirect, and relative understanding, a parabolic translation into the forms of knowledge, hence an advance up to a certain limit, which must leave many problems still unsolved (*WWR* 2, p. 288(338)).

The second example focuses on Schopenhauer's comments on the different aspects of the world. In the first of the following passages he confidently asserts that the world has two

The above examples and those mentioned in the footnotes make plain that Schopenhauer himself is uncertain about how he wants his claim the thing-in-itself is will to be interpreted. While this may explain how it is possible to derive six different interpretations of that claim from Schopenhauer's works it immediately invites the question whether and to what extent the different interpretations are consistent with each other. It is to this question that I now turn.

3

In Section 1, I observed that although Schopenhauer uses the terms 'will-to-live' and 'will' interchangeably, Interpretation 2 is best interpreted as a distinct variant of Interpretation 1, differing from it in the following ways. First, it stresses the functional aspect of the will that is important in Schopenhauer's views on teleology in nature; second, its epistemological significance differs from that of Interpretation 1. Despite these differences, however, the two interpretations are not inconsistent, a claim that is supported by Schopenhauer's assertion that: 'it is immaterial and a mere pleonasm if,

instead of simply saying "the will", we say "the will-to-live".¹ Instead, the interpretations express a difference in emphasis and context that can be explained as follows. Although the thing-in-itself is will, it manifests itself as will-to-live in the world of phenomena as teleologically ordered. Consequently, whereas our knowledge of the thing-in-itself as will is based upon immediate introspective awareness, our knowledge of it as will-to-live is based upon observation of the external phenomenal world.

However, while Interpretations 1 and 2 are mutually consistent, it is clear that neither is consistent with any of the other four interpretations. They are not consistent with Interpretation 3 since this interpretation asserts that the thing-in-itself has aspects other than will whereas Interpretations 1 and 2 assert that the thing-in-itself is exclusively will or will-to-live. They are not consistent with Interpretations 4, 5 and 6, since Interpretations 1 and 2 give a positive and literal characterisation of the thing-in-itself as will, and will-to-live respectively whereas Interpretations 4 and 6 acknowledge that nothing can be known about the nature of the thing-in-itself; and Interpretation 5, while

sides, representation and will as thing-in-itself. However, in the second passage he tentatively suggests that the world may have other aspects besides those of representation and will.

In my language, this means that the objective world, the world of representation, is not the only side of the world, but merely its external side, so to speak, and that the world has an entirely different side which is its innermost being, its kernel, the thing-in-itself. This we shall consider in the following book, calling it 'will' after the most immediate of its objectifications (*WWR* 1, pp. 30-31(61)).

From the most ancient times, man has been called the microcosm. I have reversed the proposition, and have shown the world as the *macranthropos*, *in so far as will and representation exhaust the true nature of the world as well as that of man* (*WWR* 2, p. 642(753), italics mine).

One further example of Schopenhauer's uncertainty about how he wants his claim, the thing-in-itself is will, to be interpreted appears in volume three of the *Manuscript Remains* (p. 711(655), written between 1828 and 1830), where he introduces a fairly lengthy discussion of the thing-in-itself with the following words. 'I do not yet regard as closed the dossier on Kant's thing-in-itself, at any rate I feel called upon to adduce the following remarks on the subject in an attempt to preserve Kant's doctrine of the thing-in-itself.'

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 275(347).

allowing that we can know something about it, asserts that our knowledge can only be expressed in metaphor.

It is also clear that Interpretations 3 to 6 are mutually inconsistent. If we begin with Interpretations 4 and 6, at first glance they may appear to be consistent with each other. However, this is not so, since even though both assume that nothing can be known about the nature of the thing-in-itself, the latter interpretation has a three-tiered ontology in contrast to the traditional two-tiered ontology of the former: consequently the two are not consistent. Furthermore, both are inconsistent with Interpretations 3 and 5, since the latter two interpretations allow that something can be known of the thing-in-itself. Finally, a comparison between Interpretations 3 and 5 reveals that they too are inconsistent, since the former gives a positive and literal characterisation of that aspect of the thing-in-itself that is will, whereas the latter allows that our knowledge of the thing-in-itself can only be expressed in metaphor.

In brief, of the six interpretations, only the first two are consistent with each other. The rest are inconsistent both with one another and with Interpretations 1 and 2.

4

Given that only two of the six interpretations are mutually consistent, that means that there are *five distinct interpretations* of Schopenhauer's claim that the thing-in-itself is will. This naturally invites the question whether one or more of the various interpretations is more important than the others. While there are many ways in which the notion of importance in this context might be construed, I shall limit my discussion to the following two. First, importance in terms of the value that Schopenhauer himself appears to attach to this or that interpretation; second, importance in terms of the value that a commentator

attempting to construct the most consistent account of Schopenhauer's central doctrines might attach to any given interpretation.

I shall begin by considering the importance that Schopenhauer himself appears to attach to this or that interpretation. This task requires that we first decide upon relevant criteria for their assessment. The following three criteria, while not exhaustive, are obviously fundamental, and for that reason I shall use them as the basis of my assessment. The first criterion is the degree of emphasis and clarity with which Schopenhauer expresses himself in the passages supporting the various interpretations. The second is the frequency with which the various passages appear in his writings. The third is the comparative frequency with which the passages supporting the various interpretations appear in Schopenhauer's earlier as opposed to his later works. By 'earlier' and 'later' I mean those works that he published before and after 1819 respectively.¹ Any marked differences in frequency between the earlier and the later works may fairly be taken to indicate a shift in Schopenhauer's views, thereby indicating a shift in the importance that he attaches to one or more of the various interpretations at different periods of his life. Using these three criteria I shall attempt to establish the importance of each of the interpretations to Schopenhauer himself.

5

According to Interpretations 1 and 2, the thing-in-itself is identical with the will, or will-to-live. Schopenhauer repeats this claim over forty-five times in

¹ My reason for choosing 1819 is that it marks the end of Schopenhauer's early intellectual efforts. For he had just published the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, and he believed that when read in conjunction with his 1813 doctoral thesis *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, and his 1816 work *On Vision and Colours*, this book contained all his fundamental ideas (see *WWR* 1, pp. xiii-xiv(9-10), pp. xxi-xxiii(18-20)). His next significant work was not published till 1836, and furthermore, he believed that his later publications were an elaboration and application of what he had said in his earlier works.

his early works, and in over half of these his manner of expression is emphatic and unambiguous.¹ In his later works he repeats the claim at least sixty-five times, and again in over half of these he expresses the identity emphatically.² For example:

This cannot be anything but *will*, which is therefore the *thing-in-itself* proper.³

Therefore, according to the first and second criteria, Interpretations 1 and 2 are of fundamental importance to Schopenhauer. While the number of passages supporting these interpretations is greater in his later works than in his early works, their high frequency and emphatic expression in both his early and late works suggests that their importance to him remains consistently high throughout his life.

According to Interpretation 3, the thing-in-itself has multiple aspects, only one of which is will. Its other aspects are experienced by persons such as mystics, saints and ascetics, who deny the will. Passages supporting this doctrine appear at least three times in the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation* and once in *Parerga and Paralipomena*. In each of these passages Schopenhauer expresses himself with emphasis and clarity. Consider, for example, the following passage for *Parerga and Paralipomena*:

¹ Emphatic and unambiguous expressions in Schopenhauer's early works of his claim that the thing-in-itself is identical with the will or will-to-live include: *WWR* 1, p. 110(155), p. 128(175), p. 153(205), p. 154(206), p. 162(215), p. 184(238), p. 275(347), p. 279(352), p. 280(353), p. 286(361), p. 287(361), p. 290(365), p. 292(367), p. 301(378), p. 366(455), p. 370(460), p. 402(497), p. 421(519), p. 436(536), p. 501(612), p. 503(614), p. 504(615), pp. 504-5(616), p. 506(618), p. 534(650); *MSR* 1 p. 184(169), p. 206(188); *MSR* 2, p. 486(419).

² Emphatic and unambiguous expressions in Schopenhauer's later works of his claim that the thing-in-itself is identical with the will or will-to-live include: *WWR* 2, p. 14(23), p. 16(24), p. 18(27), p. 136(158-59), p. 201(234), p. 206(240), p. 245(286), p. 307(359), p. 309(361), p. 320(374), p. 443(521), p. 484(568), p. 530(620), p. 559(656), p. 579(678), p. 589(690), p. 600(703), p. 601(705); *WN*, p. 216(202), p. 237(220), p. 252(233), p. 345(310); *PP* 2, p. 48(56), p. 90(102), p. 94(107), p. 221(241), p. 283(307); *MSR* 3, p. 84(75), p. 164(149), p. 245(224), pp. 247-48(226), p. 365(333), p. 565(518), p. 584(536).

³ *WWR* 1, p. 162(215).

Contrary to certain silly objections, I observe that the *denial of the will-to-live* does not in any way assert the annihilation of a substance, but the mere act of not-willing; that which hitherto *willed* no longer *wills*. As we know this being, this essence, the will, as thing-in-itself merely in and through the act of *willing*, we are incapable of saying or comprehending what it still is or does after it has given up that act. And so *for us* who are the phenomenon of willing, this denial is a passing over into nothing.¹

Further support for Interpretation 3 is provided by three passages from the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, and one from the third volume of the *Manuscript Remains*. In these passages Schopenhauer at least suggests that the thing-in-itself has aspects other than will. For example:

From the most ancient times, man has been called the microcosm. I have reversed the proposition and have shown the world as the macranthropos, in so far as will and representation exhaust the true nature of the world as well as that of man.²

While such passages provide some support for Interpretation 3, their more tentative wording, together with the absence of any reference to the mystics, saints or ascetics makes their support for it weaker than that provided by those passages where Schopenhauer's contention that the thing-in-itself has aspects other than will is expressed with emphasis and clarity.

In addition to those passages that merely suggest that the thing-in-itself has aspects other than will, there are two others in the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* that suggest the existence of a reality that is the object

¹ *PP* 2, p. 312(339). See also *WWR* 2, p. 198(231), p. 560(656), p. 644(754).

² *WWR* 2, p. 642(753). See also *WWR* 2, p. 288(338), p. 294(343); *MSR* 3, p. 79(70).

of mystical awareness. However, since in these passages the relationship between the object of the mystic's awareness and the thing-in-itself is not specified either directly or indirectly, they again provide less support for Interpretation 3 than that provided by those passages where Schopenhauer's contention that the thing-in-itself has aspects other than will is expressed with emphasis and clarity. The two passages follows.

Behind our existence lies something else that becomes accessible to us only by our shaking off the world.¹

With the free denial, the surrender, of the will, all those phenomena are also now abolished . . . No will: no representation, no world.²

In brief, of the ten passages that I have found to support this interpretation, four are expressed with emphasis and clarity, and while this suggests that Interpretation 3 is important to Schopenhauer, it is clearly not as important to him as Interpretations 1 and 2. However, it is noteworthy that eight of the ten passages providing moderate to strong support for Interpretation 3 appear in his later works, suggesting that its importance to him increased over time.

Interpretation 4 asserts that the nature of the thing-in-itself is *unknown*, but that it is called will because the will stands nearest to the thing-in-itself. In self-conscious awareness the thing-in-itself reveals itself as *will*, or *acts of*

¹ WWR 1, p. 405(500).

² WWR 1, p. 411(507). At the end of the section in which this passage occurs Schopenhauer adds a footnote in which he asserts that the 'nothing' that confronts those who have denied the will is the 'Prajna-Paramita' of the Buddhists. The reference to Eastern thought might suggest that this passage should be included among those that provide the strongest support for Interpretation 3, since in two of these passages similar references are made to Eastern ideas (PP 2, p. 312(339); WWR 2, p. 560(656)). However, since the footnote is absent in the first edition (1819) of the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, I conclude that as a reflection of Schopenhauer's early thought, the passage provides weaker support for Interpretation 3 than those that I have already cited in its support. The source text that Schopenhauer refers to in the footnote is *Über das Mahajana und Pradschna-Paramita* by I. J. Schmidt, and it was not published till 1836.

will, and since only the form of time is present in this state of awareness, we here come closest to a direct awareness of the thing-in-itself. For example:

Accordingly, in this inner knowledge the thing-in-itself has indeed to a great extent cast off its veils, but still does not appear quite naked. In consequence of the form of time which still adheres to it, everyone knows his *will* only in its successive individual *acts*, not as a whole, in and by itself.¹

Of the twenty or so passages supporting this interpretation, all seem ambiguous in that while they suggest that the thing-in-itself is *will*, they also assert that this is so only in the qualified sense that the thing-in-itself manifests itself most immediately as *will*. Clearly then, in terms of emphasis, clarity and frequency this interpretation is of far less importance to Schopenhauer than either Interpretations 1 and 2, and of less importance to him than Interpretation 3. However, it is noteworthy that all the passages supporting Interpretation 4 appear in Schopenhauer's later works, suggesting that as with Interpretation 3, its importance to him increases over time.

According to Interpretation 5, the thing-in-itself can be described as *will*, but only in a metaphorical sense. For example:

I now turn to a subjective consideration that belongs here: yet I can give even less distinctness to it than to the objective consideration just discussed, for I shall be able to express it only by *image and simile*

And a few lines on he continues:

¹ *WWR* 2, p. 197(230). See also *WWR* 2, p. 182(213), p. 185(216-17), pp. 196-97(229-30), pp. 197-98(231), p. 318(372), pp. 494-95(580), p. 496(581), p. 612(716); *PP* 1, p. 42(54); *MSR* 3, pp. 40-41(36-37), p. 114(103), p. 171(155), p. 353(321-22), p. 472(432), p. 595(546), p. 713(657), p. 716(660); *MSR* 4, pp. 296-97(261).

Our inner nature has its root in what is no longer phenomenon but thing-in-itself, to which therefore the forms of the phenomenon do not reach: and in this way, the chief conditions of individuality are wanting, and distinct consciousness ceases therewith.¹

In another passage Schopenhauer states that '*language* itself appertains to the temporal and spatial (just as also the *understanding* and its concepts have meaning only in the temporal and spatial);' and he continues: 'if, considering ourselves as non-temporal, we call the temporal nothing, then this is done only metaphorically and in a figurative sense.'² These words imply that while phenomena can be described literally, the thing-in-itself can only be described in metaphors. Furthermore, it seems that metaphorical descriptions of the thing-in-itself cannot be translated into literal language, since the latter 'appertains only to the temporal and spatial'. In Interpretation 5 then, Schopenhauer's assertion that the thing-in-itself is 'will', that it has a nature of endless 'striving' and that it is 'one'³ must all be irreducibly metaphorical descriptions of the thing-in-itself. That he chooses to describe it at all suggests that he assumes that experience of it is possible; that he says that all description is metaphorical suggests that he recognises the difficulty in trying to describe the contents of that experience in the public language pertaining to spatial and temporal objects and events.

In all I have found six passages that provide support for Interpretation 5. While in all of them Schopenhauer suggests that no literal language can be used to describe the thing-in-itself, in only two does he explicitly indicate that in

¹ *WWR* 2, p. 325(380). See also *WWR* 2, pp. 325-26(381); *MSR* 1, pp. 36-37(34-35); *MSR* 4, p. 35(23); *WWR* 1, pp. 110-11(155), p. 410(506).

² *MSR* 1, pp. 36-37(34-35).

³ *WWR* 1, p. 164(217), p. 309(387-88), p. 379(469), p. 397(491); *WWR* 2, p. 323(377-78).

calling the thing-in-itself 'will' he is using the term 'will' as a metaphor.¹ Of the six passages, three are in his earlier and three in his later works, and this suggests that the importance of Interpretation 5 to him does not vary. However, it is interesting to note that in two of the later passages he explicitly assimilates his own views to what he sees as similar views expressed in Eastern thought.² His acknowledgment of this convergence of views is in keeping with his high regard for Eastern thought, a regard that appears to increase with the increasing availability of literature on the East after 1820.³

Interpretation 5 is also supported by two further claims that Schopenhauer frequently makes throughout his works. These are that the phenomenal forms of space and time are the principles of individuation,⁴ and that the possibility of *representational* knowledge depends upon the existence of plurality.⁵ Taken together, these claims imply that for Schopenhauer there can be no *representational* knowledge, and therefore no literally descriptive language, of the non-spatial and non-temporal thing-in-itself; all language pertaining to it must therefore be irreducibly metaphorical or figurative. The emphasis, clarity and frequency of the passages supporting these claims, taken together with the support provided by the above-mentioned passages, suggest that, while Interpretation 5 is much less important to Schopenhauer than Interpretations 1 and 2, it is of more importance to him than Interpretation 4 and as important to him as Interpretation 3.

¹ *WWR* 2, pp. 325-26(381); *WWR* 1, pp. 110-11(155).

² *WWR* 2, p. 325(380), pp. 325-26(381).

³ See *WWR* 2, p. 169(197); *WWR* 1, pp. xv-xvi(11); *WN*, pp. 361-63(327); *PP* 2, p. 397(437). In Appendix 3 I argue that Schopenhauer's increasing acquaintance with Eastern ideas influenced the development of his own ideas.

⁴ *WWR* 1, pp. 112-13(157), pp. 127-28(175), p. 149(201), p. 169(221), pp. 331-33(414), pp. 352-54(438-441); *WWR* 2, pp. 274-75(320-22), p. 482(566), p. 496(581), p. 569(666).

⁵ *WWR* 1, p. 120(166-67), p. 331(414), p. 342(426); *WWR* 2, pp. 274-75(321), p. 322(377). I include the italicised word *representational* here to make clear the distinction that I believe that Schopenhauer makes between *representational knowledge* and *knowledge through feeling*.

If Interpretation 6, Young's interpretation, is correct, it follows that while Schopenhauer asserts many times that the thing-in-itself is will, this is not his real doctrine. Instead, the will is the metaphysical underpinning of the phenomenal world, constituting a realm that is distinct both from the world of phenomena and from the thing-in-itself. The will, on this interpretation, is the *in-itself* or the *kernel* of the world of phenomena, but is distinct from the thing-in-itself. Passages supporting the claim that for Schopenhauer the will is the in-itself or the kernel of the world appear at least ten times in Schopenhauer's earlier works, and at least twenty five times in his later works.¹ However, even given this fact, it does not follow that, according to Schopenhauer, the inner nature referred to is distinct from the thing-in-itself, and indeed there is considerable evidence to support the opposite conclusion. For in each volume of *The World as Will and Representation* there are passages that make it clear that when Schopenhauer refers to the will as the in-itself of the world, he identifies the in-itself with the thing-in-itself. For example:

I have not introduced the *thing-in-itself* surreptitiously or inferred it according to laws that exclude it, since they already belong to its phenomenon; moreover, in general I have not arrived at it by roundabout ways. On the contrary, I have demonstrated it directly, where it immediately lies, namely in the *will* that reveals itself to everyone immediately as the *in-itself* of his own phenomenon.²

¹ WWR 1, p. 112(157), p. 118(164), p. 131(179), p. 141(191), p. 267(335), p. 288(363), p. 309(387), p. 332(414), p. 374(464), p. 502(613); WWR 2, p. 136(158-59), p. 208(243), pp. 238-39(278-79), pp. 258-59(302-03), p. 269(315), p. 270(316-17), p. 273(320), p. 274(320), p. 276(323), p. 278(325), p. 286(335), p. 293(342), p. 307(359), p. 309(361), p. 310(362), p. 311(364), p. 326(382), p. 327(383), p. 349(408), p. 364(433), p. 486(570), p. 495(580), pp. 495-96(580), p. 499(585), p. 570(667-68); PP 1, pp. 222-23(245); MSR 1, p. 390(353), p. 404(366); MSR 3, p. 475(434), p. 513(470), p. 663(610).

² WWR 1, p. 503(614) (italics mine). See also WWR 1, p. 287(361), p. 354(441), p. 505(615); WWR 2, p. 136(158-59), p. 294(343-44), p. 497(583).

Of the other passages that Young appeals to in support of his interpretation the most significant are those suggesting that for Schopenhauer the thing-in-itself is unknowable. For example:

But philosophy should be *communicable* knowledge and must, therefore, be rationalism. Accordingly, at the end of my philosophy I have indicated the sphere of illuminism as something that exists but that I have guarded against setting even one foot thereon.¹

While this passage supports Young's interpretation I do not think that it does so unambiguously. For it could be interpreted as referring to the impossibility of describing the reality of the mystics, a claim that is also consistent with Interpretations 3 and 4. The ambiguity of this passage and those discussed earlier suggest that in terms of emphasis, clarity and frequency, Interpretation 6 is of small importance to Schopenhauer himself. In other words, there is no firm evidence that he ever held that the will is the metaphysical but non-noumenal essence of the phenomenal world.

To summarise: In terms of the importance of the various interpretations to Schopenhauer himself, Interpretations 1 and 2 are clearly the most important both in his early and his later works. Of the other four interpretations, Interpretations 3 and 5 rate as the next most important, with the importance of the former restricted mainly to his later works. Interpretation 4 is next, with its importance also restricted mainly to his later works, and Interpretation 6 appears to be of little importance to Schopenhauer himself, thereby indicating that he did not hold the view that is expressed in that interpretation.

¹ PP 2, p. 10(17), and see Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 34; PP 1(54), p. 42, and see Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, pp. 32-33; WWR 1, p. 428(526), WWR 2, p. 185(216-17), pp. 197-98(231), p. 612(716), and see Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 33; WWR 2, p. 198(231), and see Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 35.

Having considered the importance of the various interpretations in terms of the value that Schopenhauer himself appears to attach to them, I shall now consider their importance in terms of the value that a commentator attempting to construct the most consistent account of Schopenhauer's central doctrines might attach to them. The criterion of importance is thus the coherence of each interpretation with Schopenhauer's other central doctrines.

According to Interpretation 1, the thing-in-itself is identical with the will. While this interpretation is clearly of fundamental importance in Schopenhauer's own eyes, it encounters serious difficulties in terms of its coherence with some of his other doctrines. Four of these immediately come to mind. The first is the Kantian epistemological doctrine that *prima facie* he endorses; for according to this doctrine we can have no knowledge of the thing-in-itself.¹ Since Interpretation 1 suggests that we have a direct awareness of the thing-in-itself in self-consciousness, it is inconsistent with this epistemology. The second of his doctrines with which it is inconsistent is that aspect of Kant's theory of knowledge which asserts that 'concepts without an intuition in some way corresponding to them . . . can yield no knowledge',² and 'thoughts without content are empty',³ a doctrine that I shall henceforth refer to as 'concept-empiricism'.⁴ Schopenhauer expresses this doctrine in his own words in the following way:

¹ For a most emphatic expression of this doctrine see *WWR* 1, pp. 417-18(514). See also *WWR* 1, p. 420(517); *WWR* 2, p. 183(214-15); *PP* 1, p. 42(54).

² *CPR*, A50/B74, p. 92.

³ *CPR*, A51/B75, p. 93. See also *CPR*, A139/B178, p. 181; A239/B298, p. 259; A696/B724, pp. 565-66.

⁴ I am indebted here to Julian Young's discussion of concept-empiricism (see Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, pp. 22-25).

For concepts obtain all meaning, all content, only from their reference to representations of perception, from which they have been abstracted, drawn off, in other words, formed by the dropping of everything inessential. If, therefore, the foundation of perception is taken away from them, they are empty and void.¹

According to this doctrine then, when Schopenhauer describes the non-perceptual thing-in-itself as 'will' or 'will-to-live', these words really have no meaning.² However, in the passages supporting Interpretation 1 it is clear that Schopenhauer thinks that his assertion, the thing-in-itself is will, is indeed a meaningful expression. Hence, Interpretation 1 is inconsistent with the doctrine of concept-empiricism that he takes over from Kant.

The third doctrine with which it is inconsistent concerns mysticism. Schopenhauer writes approvingly of the mystics, yet these suggest that the nature of ultimate reality is unknowable to normal consciousness. By contrast, according to Interpretation 1, in self-conscious awareness everyone confronts the thing-in-itself, or ultimate reality, and knows it as will.

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 474(580). See also *WWR* 1, p. 62(100), p. 65(104), p. 475(582); *WWR* 2, p. 71(85-86), p. 77(92), p. 192(224-25), p. 286(335-36), p. 484(568), pp. 493-95(578-80).

² It may be objected that I am exaggerating the importance to Schopenhauer of concept-empiricism. For does he not attribute meaning to the concepts of 'matter' and 'knowing subject', while allowing that neither have their origin in perception (*WWR* 2, p. 15(23-24). See also *WWR* 1, p. 213(272-73))? While this objection suggests that Schopenhauer has more than one theory of meaning, this possibility does not overcome the difficulty that faces him in attributing meaning to his claim that the thing-in-itself is will. For unlike the concepts of 'matter' and 'knowing subject', which Schopenhauer says 'are discovered only through abstraction', he says of the concept of will that it has its origin in 'the most immediate consciousness of everyone' (*WWR* 1, p. 112(157). See also *WWR* 2, p. 600(703); *WWR* 1, p. 162(215), p. 436(536), p. 503(614), p. 504(615); *WN*, p. 216(220), p. 345(310) for passages in which he makes it clear that we are directly aware of the will in self-consciousness). Consequently, even if Schopenhauer has a theory of meaning other than concept-empiricism, which allows him to ascribe meaning to such abstractions as 'matter' and 'knowing subject', it seems unlikely that this theory will be of any use to him in ascribing meaning to his experienced-based claim that the thing-in-itself is will.

By looking inwards, every individual recognises in his inner being, which is his will, the thing-in-itself, and hence that which alone is everywhere real.¹

Furthermore, Schopenhauer is aware that mystical experiences are reported as being accompanied by feelings of blissfulness.

If however, it should be absolutely insisted on that somehow a positive knowledge is to be acquired of what philosophy can express only negatively as denial of the will, nothing would be left but to refer to the state which is experienced by all those who have attained to complete denial of the will, and which is denoted by the names *ecstasy, rapture, illumination, union with God, and so on*.²

This claim seems inconsistent with the experience of an ultimate reality that is an endlessly striving will, the source of immense suffering in the phenomenal world.³

The fourth doctrine with which it is inconsistent is that of salvation. According to this doctrine, the only hope of our escaping from the suffering which is inevitable in this will-permeated world is through the denial of our will. But if the world in itself is also will, as the first interpretation suggests,

¹ WWR 2, p. 600(703). See also WWR 1, p. 162(215), p. 436(536), p. 503(614), p. 504(615); WN, p. 216(220), p. 345(310).

² WWR 1, p. 410(506). See also WWR 1, p. 391(483-84), p. 404(499-500).

³ It may be objected that Schopenhauer's doctrine of will does not commit him to the view that the will as thing-in-itself is evil, but only to the view that the will, when manifested through the individuating forms of the intellect, is the source of suffering in the phenomenal world: for it is only when the will's manifestations, the ideas, compete for the matter, the space, and the time of another that suffering inevitably results (WWR 1, pp. 144-47(195-88). See also WWR 1, p. 309(387), p. 379(469), p. 397(491); and see Simmel, pp. 105-6). I readily accept this analysis, but nevertheless still think that Schopenhauer's endorsement of the claims of the mystics is incompatible with the experience of an ultimate reality that is will. For to suggest that mystical reality is will is both counter-intuitive and lacking in all textual support. Furthermore, the 'vain striving', which Schopenhauer says belongs to the nature of the will, does not to my knowledge feature in either the mystic's descriptions of their experiences or in Schopenhauer's references to such descriptions.

then whether denial of the will is denial of the phenomenal will or of the will as thing-in-itself, there can be no salvation. For in the former case, suffering is inescapable and salvation impossible; and in the latter case, salvation seems an escape to empty nothingness, making Schopenhauer's regard for the claims of the mystics seem absurd.

Turning now to Interpretation 2, which asserts that the thing-in-itself is the 'will-to-live', we find that it encounters all the same difficulties as Interpretation 1 in terms of its coherence with those of Schopenhauer's other doctrines that I discussed above. However, in stressing the functional aspect of the will, Interpretation 2 is more obviously compatible with his views on teleology than Interpretation 1. This is an important point because his views on teleology explain how it is that a 'blind' will can nevertheless give rise both to the adaptation and order that occurs in nature, and to the will's striving for ever higher levels of objectification.¹

According to Interpretation 3, the thing-in-itself has multiple aspects, only one of which is will, and I suggested that while this interpretation is less important to Schopenhauer than Interpretations 1 and 2, its importance to him increases over time. However, in terms of its consistency with his other doctrines, there is no doubt that Interpretation 3 is in a far more attractive position than Interpretations 1 and 2. For while admittedly it is inconsistent with his Kantian epistemology and doctrine of concept-empiricism, it has the great advantage of being consistent with his doctrines on mysticism and salvation. This is because it asserts that the thing-in-itself has aspects other than will, and it is these that are the objects of mystical awareness, and that allow the possibility of salvation. Furthermore, while not consistent with his unqualified claim that the thing-in-itself is will, Interpretation 3 can

¹ See *WWR* 1, pp. 144-47(195-98).

accommodate this claim, since it allows that the thing-in-itself is will in at least one of its aspects.

It is worth stressing that Schopenhauer's doctrines on the will, on mysticism and on salvation, are peculiarly his own doctrines in contrast to the epistemological and conceptual doctrines that he takes over from Kant. Furthermore, he makes it clear that he attaches the highest importance to these doctrines. For he maintains that in identifying the thing-in-itself as will, an insight which in inchoate form he attributes to Kant,¹ he has identified the fundamental explanatory principle of the world;² and in showing how salvation and mysticism are possible, he believes that he has shed light on what is 'beyond all comparison the most important truth there can be'.³ It is clear then that Interpretation 3 is of fundamental importance in terms of its coherence with Schopenhauer's other central doctrines.

According to Interpretation 4, the nature of the thing-in-itself is unknown but it is called 'will' because the will stands nearest to the thing-in-itself. I argued that while the importance of this interpretation in Schopenhauer's own mind appears to increase over time, it is much less than either Interpretations 1 and 2, and also less than that of Interpretation 3. However, in terms of its coherence with his other main doctrines it is significant that Interpretation 4 is consistent with both of the doctrines that he takes over from Kant. These are the epistemology that precludes knowledge of the thing-in-itself, and the doctrine of concept-empiricism, which restricts meaning to concepts that have application to objects of perception. The consistency of these Kantian doctrines with Interpretation 4 suggests that the strong influence of Kant on

¹ See *WWR* 1, p. 422(519), p. 501(612), p. 505(616) p. 534(650).

² *WWR* 1, p. 534(650).

³ *WWR* 2, p. 628(737).

Schopenhauer, an influence that he readily acknowledges,¹ remained a force throughout his life, and contributed to the possibility of multiple interpretations of his fundamental claim. Further, Interpretation 4 is also consistent with Schopenhauer's doctrines on mysticism and salvation—given that it asserts that the nature of the thing-in-itself is unknowable to ordinary awareness—but it is not consistent with his claim that the thing-in-itself is will. And, since this claim and its corollary, that metaphysics concerns the thing-in-itself,² are the principal ways in which Schopenhauer sees his own philosophy as an advance upon that of Kant's,³ their inconsistency with Interpretation 4 is a major difficulty for that interpretation.

According to Interpretation 5, the thing-in-itself is called will, but only in a metaphorical sense. I suggested that this interpretation, while of much less importance to Schopenhauer than Interpretations 1 and 2, is nevertheless of some importance to him. I further noted that while its importance appears to be constant throughout his works, in two of the later passages supporting this interpretation, he explicitly draws parallels between his own views and those expressed in Eastern thought, and that this assimilation of views reflects the increasing importance to him of Eastern ideas. In terms of its coherence with his other doctrines, Interpretation 5 is consistent with Schopenhauer's concept-empiricism in that it restricts the use of concepts, capable of *literal* application, to the phenomenal world. It can also accommodate his central claim that the thing-in-itself is will provided that the word 'will' is interpreted as a metaphor. However, it is not consistent with his Kantian epistemology, according to which no knowledge of the thing-in-itself is possible, nor is it consistent with

¹ *WWR* 1, p. xv(10), p. xxiii(20), pp. 416-17(513).

² *WWR* 1, p. 445(546); *WWR* 2, p. 177(206-7).

³ *WWR* 2, pp. 173-74(203), pp. 180-81(211-12), p. 191(223), p. 196(229), p. 289(339); *WWR* 1, pp. 427-28(525-26), pp. 501-2(611), p. 534(650).

his doctrines on mysticism and salvation, since these require that the thing-in-itself is not even metaphorically like the will.¹

Finally, according to Interpretation 6, the will is the metaphysical but non-noumenal essence of the phenomenal world. I argued that this interpretation is of little importance to Schopenhauer himself, and that he did not hold the view that it expresses. However, when assessed in terms of its coherence with his other central doctrines, Interpretation 6, like Interpretation 4, is in a stronger position than when assessed in terms of its importance to Schopenhauer himself. For it is consistent with his Kantian epistemology in precluding knowledge of the thing-in-itself, and it is consistent, though subject to a modification, with the doctrine of concept-empiricism that he takes over from Kant. The modification is that the range of possible experience is extended beyond phenomena to the metaphysical will, the non-noumenal essence of the phenomenal world.² Interpretation 6 is also consistent with Schopenhauer's doctrines on mysticism and salvation. Nevertheless, as with Interpretation 4, it is not consistent with Schopenhauer's fundamental claim that the thing-in-itself is will. However, in postulating the will as the metaphysical but non-noumenal essence of reality, it has a decided advantage over Interpretation 4, since by contrast with the latter it is able to accommodate Schopenhauer's strong belief that his metaphysics of will enables him to go beyond Kantian metaphysics.

This brings me to the two most important conclusions to be drawn from what has been considered in this chapter. The first is that Interpretation 3 is the best able to accommodate Schopenhauer's most fundamental doctrines *as these stand in the text of his works*. However, a consideration of the direction that

1 See footnote 1 on page 61.

2 While Young believes that his interpretation is consistent with Schopenhauer's 'unmodified' doctrine of concept-empiricism, I argue in Chapter 3 that this position is untenable.

his thought appears to take leads to an altogether different and perhaps unexpected conclusion. This is that Interpretation 6 is the one that Schopenhauer would have ended up embracing had his thought continued to develop under the increasing influence of Eastern ideas. For Interpretation 6 accommodates the Eastern view that there exists a more ultimate reality than that of our everyday world, that the former is superior to the latter, and that it is only accessible to persons who have attained a higher level of consciousness.¹ Furthermore, as Young stresses, Interpretation 6 is consistent with Schopenhauer's Kantian epistemology and with his doctrine of concept-empiricism.² Finally, and most importantly, it accommodates Schopenhauer's own central doctrine, found in Eastern teaching, that our everyday world is fundamentally will and that this gives rise to inevitable and unceasing suffering.

1 An extensive discussion of the influence of Eastern ideas on the development of Schopenhauer's thought is included in Appendix 3.

2 But see the previous footnote.

CHAPTER 3

YOUNG'S INTERPRETATION OF SCHOPENHAUER'S CLAIM THAT THE THING-IN-ITSELF IS WILL

In this chapter I assess Schopenhauer's doctrine of will as presented by Julian Young in his book *Willing and Unwilling: A Study in the Philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer* (1987). Young's interpretation constitutes a radical departure from the traditional view, according to which the thing-in-itself is will (Interpretation 1). For he suggests that despite Schopenhauer's numerous assertions that the thing-in-itself is will, this is not his real doctrine. On Young's interpretation of Schopenhauer, the will is the metaphysical underpinning of the world of phenomena, but it is distinct both from that world and also from the thing-in-itself. Consequently, in place of the traditional view, which asserts that Schopenhauer adopts a double-aspect ontology comprising the will as thing-in-itself and phenomena, Young maintains that Schopenhauer adopts a three tiered ontology comprising the thing-in-itself, will, and phenomena. Young says that for Schopenhauer, although metaphysical knowledge is possible, it is knowledge of the will and not knowledge of the thing-in-itself, which in true Kantian tradition remains unknowable.

In the last chapter I argued that while this interpretation is of little importance to Schopenhauer himself, it is the one that he would have ended up embracing had his thought continued to develop under the increasing influence of Eastern ideas. These claims are controversial and therefore make a more detailed consideration of Young's interpretation necessary. There are several other reasons for undertaking a more detailed assessment. First, Young's interpretation is a very radical departure from the traditional interpretation,

according to which the thing-in-itself is identical with the will. Second, his interpretation appears compatible with four positions that Schopenhauer endorses, namely his Kantian epistemology and concept-empiricism¹, together with his doctrines of salvation and mysticism. Third, Young's interpretation brings out the apparent inconsistency and ambiguity of some of Schopenhauer's assertions. Finally, if Young's is the correct interpretation, it makes Schopenhauer's metaphysics far less exotic than has traditionally been thought. For if Young is right, Schopenhauer's metaphysical speculation amounts to no more than an attempt to give a deeper analysis of phenomenal experience, and the thing-in-itself is significant only in relation to mystical consciousness. In discussing Young's interpretation, I shall first expound and assess what in my view are the four main arguments that he presents in its favour, and shall conclude with an overview of this assessment.

1

Argument 1

Schopenhauer endorses Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism, according to which our knowledge of reality is conditioned by the forms of the intellect, and is therefore knowledge of appearances or representation only. Clearly this includes our knowledge of the objects of inner experience (temporally though not spatially organised) no less than the objects of outer experience.

Schopenhauer also endorses Kant's doctrine of concept-empiricism according to which meaning can only be attached to concepts which in principle are objects of possible sense experience.

¹ However, as I argued in Chapter 2, the concept-empiricism that Young attributes to Kant is a modified version of Kant's version. For whereas Kant restricts experience to objects of perception, Young extends human experience to the non-noumenal will which, on his interpretation of Schopenhauer, is the metaphysical underpinning of the phenomenal world.

From these premises, two things follow. First, Schopenhauer endorses the Kantian conclusion that ultimate reality (or the thing-in-itself), being unconditioned by phenomenal forms, is unknowable to the human mind (at least in normal states of consciousness). Second, Schopenhauer holds that because the thing-in-itself is not an object of possible sense experience, neither the concept of *will* nor any other concept can meaningfully be applied to it.¹

While I accept the validity of this argument, it omits a crucially important aspect of Schopenhauer's thought, an omission that undermines the argument's conclusions. Schopenhauer believes that Kant correctly demonstrates the impossibility of acquiring knowledge of the thing-in-itself through the a priori forms of the intellect. But in the appendix to *The World as Will and Representation*, where Schopenhauer critically appraises Kant's philosophy, he asserts that Kant neglects the 'richest of all sources of knowledge, inner and outer experience'; and, he continues, 'I say that the solution to the riddle of the world must come from an understanding of the world itself.'² The same point is made again in the following passage in which Schopenhauer contrasts his own method with that of Kant.

We can arrive at its being-in-itself only on the entirely different path I have followed, by means of the addition of self-consciousness, which proclaims the will as the in-itself of our own phenomenon. But then the thing-in-itself becomes something *toto genere* different from the representation and its elements, as I have explained.³

1 Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, pp. 28-32.

2 *WWR* 1, p. 428(156).

3 *WWR* 1, p. 436(536).

The entirely different path to which Schopenhauer is referring is a pre-reflective direct intuition. He refers to this form of awareness as *feeling* and unambiguously contrasts it with rational knowledge. He states, for example:

From all these considerations the reader has now gained in the abstract, and hence in clear and certain terms, a knowledge which everyone possesses directly in the concrete, namely as feeling. This is the knowledge that the inner nature of his own phenomenon, which manifests itself to him as representation both through his actions and through the permanent substratum of these his body, is his will.¹

Young acknowledges that Schopenhauer sometimes gives 'severe provocation' to those who would read him as asserting a strict identity between the will and the thing-in-itself.² However, he thinks that passages expressing this explicit identity simply cannot be taken at face value. He states that Schopenhauer's endorsement of Kantian idealism and his admiration for the *Aesthetic* in Kant's first *Critique* must surely entail that the self in itself is just as inaccessible to human experience as is the object in itself. To assert otherwise, he contends, would be a crude misunderstanding of Kant's doctrine.³ Furthermore, Young states that it is absurd to think that Schopenhauer believes in the possibility of direct experience or knowledge of the noumenon, given his criticism of the Hegelians whom he lampoons for their use of 'rational intuition' to peer through little 'windows' at the Absolute.⁴ However, in my view Young is wrong here, since I believe that

1 WWR 1, p. 109(154). See also WWR 1, p. 271(343-44). See Chapter 7 for a fuller discussion of the role of feeling in Schopenhauer's epistemology.

2 See Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, pp. 28-29.

3 Ibid., p. 30.

4 Ibid., p. 29. Further on, when discussing Schopenhauer's acceptance of 'illuminism' Young contends that 'Schopenhauer's real objection to Fichte *et al.* is not that they have fabricated a faculty, but rather that they have no business bringing it into philosophy' (Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 34, and see PP 2, pp. 10-11(17)). In the passages from PP 2 that Young refers to, Schopenhauer allows that 'concealed illuminism may often underlie rationalism', but in the case of Fichte and Schelling, he asserts that their 'noisy

Schopenhauer claims a source of knowledge that he thinks Kant simply fails to consider. And it is this claim that distinguishes *his* method from the illicit methods of the post-Kantians, and which leads him to assert that *the will is the thing-in-itself*.

Young states that Schopenhauer's claim *ich selbst Kantianer bin* (I myself am a Kantian)¹ is further evidence that he agrees with Kant that the thing-in-itself is unknowable. However, again I think that Young is mistaken, since in both Schopenhauer's appraisal of Kant's philosophy in the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, and in Book 2 of the same volume, he treats as the essence of Kantianism the distinction between the thing-in-itself and the phenomenal world, stressing that between the two there always stands the intellect.² It is this distinction surely, rather than Kant's belief that the thing-in-itself is unknowable, that is at the core of Schopenhauer's Kantianism. While it is true that his Kantianism also includes his belief that our representational knowledge of the world is conditioned by the forms of our intellect, and therefore cannot be knowledge of the thing-in-itself, I think that he departs from Kantian epistemology in his appeal to that other form of knowledge, feeling, to make good his claim to know that the thing-in-itself is

appeal to intellectual intuition and the bold statement of its substance with a claim to the objective validity thereof . . . are impudent and objectionable.' In other words, Schopenhauer allows for mystical consciousness, but he objects to any attempt to pass its content off as 'objective' knowledge, since the latter has application only to representations. In these passages Schopenhauer makes no mention of that other form of non-representational knowledge 'feeling', and I acknowledge that the passages can certainly be read as supporting Young's interpretation that *all* knowledge of the thing-in-itself is impossible. However, the point still holds that Schopenhauer's criticism of Fichte *et al.* does not rule out the possibility that he allows another form of non-intellectual (and hence non-Fichte-like) knowledge to justify his claim that the thing-in-itself is will. In my view, these passages provide another example of apparent inconsistency and ambiguity in Schopenhauer's writings, and while for the reasons outlined in this chapter I do not accept Young's interpretation, I nevertheless concede that considered on their own, these passages are supportive of his view.

1 *PP* 1, p. 42(54), and see Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. ix. However, see also *MSR* 3, p. 132(121) where Schopenhauer qualifies his claim to be a Kantian. He asserts: 'For my part *in so far as I am a Kantian*, Kant said that we cannot know anything beyond experience and its possibility; I admit this, yet I maintain that experience itself, taken in its totality as something given, is capable of an explanation, and this I have given' (*italics mine*).

2 *WWR* 1, pp. 417-18(514), p. 120(166), p. 434(514).

will. Young's interpretation then, while consistent with the first part of Schopenhauer's epistemology, is inconsistent with the second.

Young makes a further point which concerns the second premise of his argument. He asserts that Schopenhauer's metaphysical *will* satisfies the demand of concept-empiricism, on the grounds that it is something 'thoroughly actual and empirically given'.¹ Young interprets these words as evidence that Schopenhauer's metaphysical will is not to be identified with Kant's non-empirical thing-in-itself. However, against this interpretation there is the following passage in which Schopenhauer makes clear that metaphysics concerns the thing-in-itself.

If we wish to go beyond this representation, we arrive at the question as to the thing-in-itself, the answer to which is the theme of my whole work, as of all metaphysics in general.²

In the light of this assertion, Schopenhauer's claim that the metaphysical will is something 'thoroughly actual and empirically given', although ambiguous, is best interpreted as evidence that Schopenhauer appeals to a direct experience to justify his claim that the will is the thing-in-itself.

Most commentators do not accept that Schopenhauer's claim to know that the thing-in-itself is will can be justified, given his endorsement of Kantian epistemology. But of course the alleged fact that it cannot be justified in no way alters the fact of Schopenhauer making the assertion many times. Young's interpretation has the advantage of removing the problem of justification, but this advantage has to be balanced against the disadvantage of discounting the numerous passages where Schopenhauer states that the will is

1 Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 31 and see *WWR* 2, p. 349(408).

2 *WWR* 1, p. 445(546). See also *WWR* 2, pp. 182-83(214), p. 177(207-8).

the thing-in-itself. And this is no small point, since, as I mentioned in the last chapter, Schopenhauer repeats this claim over forty-five times in his early works and over sixty-five times in his later works. It must also be balanced against the plausibility of other relevant aspects of Young's interpretation, and this brings us to his next argument.

2

Argument 2

Schopenhauer believes that the task of philosophy is to complete the scientific image of the world. While he thinks that his doctrine of *will* enables this task to be done, he acknowledges that it is possible only within the limits which are inseparable from our finite human nature.

Schopenhauer endorses Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism, according to which our finite nature limits our knowledge to appearances or phenomena only.

Therefore, Schopenhauer does not identify the will, which completes the scientific image of the world, with the thing-in-itself.¹

To support this argument Young attempts to show how Schopenhauer's metaphysical will can complete our understanding of the natural world without appeal to notions of transcendent reality. I shall first outline the various strands of Young's argument and then undertake a critical appraisal of it.

Young begins by arguing that Schopenhauer believes nature to be universally lawful, and that its lawfulness presupposes the existence of natural 'forces' or 'powers'. By natural forces he notes that Schopenhauer means those entities which constitute an 'inner mechanism', an 'inner conditioning of

¹ Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, pp. 32-33.

... [its] reaction to external causes'. These forces, asserts Young, are neither causes nor effects; for example, gravity is that which 'endows a cause with efficacy'.¹ Young asserts that according to Schopenhauer the nature of these natural forces is an eternal secret to science, for whom they are unknown 'x's':² and because of this, science can never discover the 'essence' of the world. Young then outlines Schopenhauer's reasons for making these claims. He maintains that theory-reduction in science is often successful in deriving the laws governing one set of bodies from an account of their constitution as a structure of a set of more fundamental bodies, together with laws governing the latter. However, eventually this reduction must come to an end, at which point science posits a set of what it regards as primitive or ultimate entities, together with the laws governing their behaviour. And it is the forces presupposed by these laws, the ultimate original natural forces, that constitute the 'insoluble residuum' of natural science.³

Young argues that according to Schopenhauer these original forces escape the net of scientific description because the forces inherent in the most fundamental entities cannot be understood by grounding them in structure. This is because, by definition, the most fundamental bodies must be structureless. Young asserts that Schopenhauer's conception of matter shows that he endorses this view, since he accepts the doctrine of Boscovich, Priestley and Kant that the ultimate constituents of matter are disembodied forces that lack spatial structure. But, Young asks, why should the inability of science to provide a structural grounding to the laws or dispositions of ultimate entities amount to any incompleteness in its account of the world? He declares that for

1 Ibid., pp. 40-41, and see *WWR* 1, p. 100(142); *FW*, p. 34(72); *WWR* 1, p. 131(178-79).

2 Young uses the term 'natural forces' throughout his discussion, and while Schopenhauer also uses this term, he mixes it interchangeably with the terms 'forces of nature', 'original forces' and 'forces of matter'.

3 Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 42.

Schopenhauer the answer to this question lies in his conception of the relation between science and semantics.¹

Schopenhauer endorses the view that *operari* must flow from *esse*, and this entails that it must always be possible to say, asserts Young, 'what it is that is disposed to act in the ways in question'. Young argues that this contention is a version of Schopenhauer's concept-empiricism, according to which meaning can only be attached to concepts that in principle are objects of possible sense experience. However, in this case the principle is put in the 'material mode'. In other words, it asserts that a term's significance cannot be specified purely in terms of its '*operari*'. Yet this is precisely what science does when it uses words like 'gravity' and 'electricity'. He concludes that Schopenhauer's argument for the inadequacy of natural science is therefore a semantic one,² arguing that Schopenhauer thinks that in giving his account of why scientific explanation is inadequate, he has thereby discovered a precise statement of the problem of metaphysics: its task is to provide semantic respectability to natural science at its fundamental level. It must give an account of the nature of the original forces in terms of objects of possible sense experience that do not appeal to spatial structure.³

In the next stage of his argument Young discusses how Schopenhauer's metaphysical will is able to provide such an account without appeal to notions of transcendent reality. He begins by noting that according to Schopenhauer when we introspect we become aware of will, the inner mechanism of our actions.⁴ Included in our awareness are volitions, desires, pleasures and pains, all of which he refers to as 'affections' of will. But Schopenhauer also

1 Ibid., pp. 42-45.

2 Ibid., pp. 45-46.

3 Ibid., pp. 46-47.

4 Ibid., pp. 50-51.

refers to the will of the individual person, and Young makes the assertion, which is crucial to his interpretation, that 'will' in this second sense is equivalent to what Schopenhauer calls 'character'.¹ By 'character' Schopenhauer means that which provides every life with a fundamental tone, a tone that enables the careful observer to see that each life's 'manifold events and scenes are at bottom like variations on one and the same theme'.² Young next asserts that Schopenhauer intends character to be the exact subjective analogue of natural force. This means that from the subjective viewpoint character underlies our behaviour, while from the objective standpoint it is the natural forces that play this role. However, Young notes that if subjective access to character is also to constitute access to the inner nature of the forces that govern our bodily behaviour, then a stronger claim must be made: character must be identical with this set of forces. This assertion is also crucial to Young's interpretation, since he thinks that it is only if Schopenhauer takes will, character and the natural forces to be identical, can he claim to have identified the essence of the natural forces in terms of an object of possible sense experience, i.e., as will as expressed in human character.³

Young sets out the formal argument required to establish the identity between character and the natural forces but concludes that at best it can only be valid with respect to voluntary or intentional behaviour. He says that of course Schopenhauer wants eventually to claim that all natural forces, including those that also ground involuntary behaviour, are to be identified with will. But he contends that this 'extension' of will beyond its normal sphere of application must rely on separate arguments.⁴

1 Ibid., p. 51. Although Young is not explicit, I assume that in his discussion of character he refers to Schopenhauer's 'intelligible' character. This assumption is supported by the fact that Young later goes on to discuss character under its 'empirical' and 'acquired' aspects.

2 Ibid., p. 52, and see *WWR* 2, p. 35(46).

3 Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 53.

4 Ibid., pp. 53-55.

Young asserts that in extending the notion of will to the forces that ground involuntary behaviour Schopenhauer appeals to teleology. He states that, according to Schopenhauer instinctive behaviour is best explained as the striving or willing of the organism's metaphysical counterpart, the constellation of forces that objectifies itself in the organism. It is a striving determined by needs, but these needs are not made conscious to the organism, since instinctive behaviour is a transition from the physical into the metaphysical.¹ To extend the notion of will to include the nature of humans other than oneself, Young maintains that Schopenhauer relies upon an argument against solipsism,² and to extend it to the rest of organic nature he asserts that Schopenhauer appeals to a teleological argument. For Schopenhauer sees organic nature as universally purposive, and he explains this alleged fact by claiming that the basis of every being's existence is will, whose essence is to strive endlessly.³ Young notes that Schopenhauer has some reservations in extending will to inorganic nature, since he believes that the existence of final causes is 'problematical' in this realm, and that the appearance of teleology may be a mere human projection. Nevertheless, Schopenhauer does extend the notion of will to inorganic nature, and Young suggests two reasons for his doing so. First, to do so conforms to the Law of Homogeneity, which Schopenhauer endorses as a fundamental tool of philosophy. Second, to do so meets the demand on philosophy to complete the scientific image of the world. To refuse to see the will at work in the operation of inorganic forces is to acknowledge our ignorance of their nature, and to render scientific explanation of inorganic nature meaningless.⁴

1 Ibid., pp. 66-67.

2 Ibid., pp. 63-64.

3 Ibid., p. 66.

4 Ibid., pp. 68-69.

Young then considers Schopenhauer's move from the plurality of wills, which correspond to the many individual centres of will, to the one world-will of which he often speaks. Young argues that it is Schopenhauer's views on teleology that lead him to speak of this unique entity—*the will*. Just as the suitability of the parts of each individual suggests that each is a product of a will, so the overall 'harmony' that exists in the world, wherein all its parts co-exist in mutual interdependence, suggests that the whole is a product of one world-will.¹

To summarise Young's position up to this point: his aim is to show how Schopenhauer's metaphysical will can complete our understanding of the natural world without appeal to notions of transcendent reality. He begins by arguing that according to Schopenhauer science can never give an adequate account of reality, since its ultimate terms, the natural forces, constitute an 'insoluble residuum'. However, he maintains that the alleged inadequacy of science enables Schopenhauer to formulate a precise statement of the problem of metaphysics: it must give an account of the original natural forces in terms of objects of possible sense experience that do not appeal to spatial structure. Young asserts that Schopenhauer attempts to do this by first identifying our inner experience of ourselves as will with our intelligible character, and then identifying character with the natural forces that ground our voluntary behaviour. He holds that Schopenhauer extends the notion of will to the forces that ground our involuntary behaviour by appealing to teleology, and that he extends it to the inner nature of other persons by appealing to an argument against solipsism. To extend it to the rest of organic nature, Young continues, Schopenhauer again appeals to teleology, and to complete the extension to include inorganic nature, he holds that Schopenhauer appeals to the Law of Homogeneity and to what he sees as the demand on philosophy to complete the

¹ Ibid., p. 73.

scientific image of the world. Young then considers Schopenhauer's move from the plurality of wills, which constitute the essence of each character and of the natural forces, to the one world-will of which he often speaks, and he suggests that Schopenhauer posits such an entity to account for what he sees as the 'overall harmony' that exists in the world. Having summarised Young's position so far, I shall continue with his argument.

At this point Young sounds a cautionary note. He asserts that Schopenhauer is not whole-hearted in his advocacy of one world-will. For the presence of purpose does not strictly entail a designing agent. Furthermore, even if the harmony we seem to find in nature actually exists, it may not demand a will for its explanation.¹ Young considers these reservations to be significant for two reasons. First, if Schopenhauer does endorse the inference from the teleological character of phenomenal nature to that of the thing-in-itself, he is guilty of engaging in transcendent metaphysics. Young thinks that Schopenhauer accepts the Kantian view that the thing-in-itself is unknowable, and he therefore infers that Schopenhauer does not seriously endorse this inference. Second, Young argues that the teleological considerations suggesting that nature is the product of will also suggest that the character of the will is evil. For it is the source of much suffering and misery, caring only for the survival of species and not for individual members. If Schopenhauer does endorse the inference from the teleological character of phenomenal nature to that of the thing-in-itself, Young argues, there is no possibility of the salvation which in Book 4 of *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer allows us to hope for. He concludes that although Schopenhauer often speaks of the one world-will, he does not seriously believe in such an entity.² Though he does not explicitly say so, Young seems

1 Ibid., p. 77.

2 Ibid., p. 77.

to think that in Schopenhauer's metaphysics there exist *many individual wills*, but not one over-riding will. Each will is identical with a force or constellation of forces that constitute the essence of all forms of phenomena.¹

This concludes my outline of Young's account of will, interpreted as the metaphysical yet non-noumenal essence of the phenomenal world. In appraising it I shall first outline my general response. I agree with Young that Schopenhauer thinks himself able to make scientific explanation meaningful by identifying the will as the essence of the original forces; but I do not think that Schopenhauer tries to achieve this by first identifying human character with will, and then arguing for the identity of human will or character with the original forces. Instead, I think that for Schopenhauer will is an ultimate metaphysical entity,² while character and the natural forces are what he calls 'grades of objectification' of will. He holds that we are aware of will as thing-in-itself in self-consciousness, and that it is this direct intuition of the essence of ultimate reality that entitles us to speak meaningfully of the will's various objectifications.

Turning to specific arguments, my first point is that Young's identification of will with individual character is not supported by the text. For in Book 4 of *The World as Will and Representation*, where Schopenhauer gives his most complete discussion of character, he states:

For he [Kant] established the difference between the intelligible and empirical characters. I wholly support this distinction, for the former

1 It may be wondered why Young does not consider the possibility that Schopenhauer's references to the one world-will refer to a non-noumenal unitary will. If this were so, however, the awareness of will in self-consciousness would be a second-order awareness of will in its fundamental form. And this would not allow the strict identity between will, character and the original natural forces that Young thinks Schopenhauer endorses.

2 This is clearly true of Interpretations 1, 2, and 3, all of which are crucial to an understanding of Schopenhauer's philosophy. For, as I argued in the last chapter, Interpretations 1 and 2 are the most important to Schopenhauer himself while Interpretation 3 is the most important in terms of its consistency with Schopenhauer's central doctrines.

is will as thing-in-itself, *in so far as it appears in a definite individual in a definite degree*, while the latter is this phenomenon itself as it manifests itself in the mode of action according to time, and in the physical structure according to space.¹

and he goes on to state:

The intelligible character of every man is to be regarded *as an act of will* outside time, and thus indivisible and unalterable.²

From the first of the above quotations it is clear that intelligible character is will only as a degree of manifestation of will as thing-in-itself. From the second it is clear that intelligible character results from an act of will outside of space and time. Both passages indicate that will as expressed in individual intelligible character presupposes will in some more fundamental state.³ Therefore, according to Schopenhauer, will and character are not identical.

Young's identification of will with the natural forces is also not supported by the text. For, when referring to the natural forces, Schopenhauer describes them as being the lowest grade of the will's objectification: not, as Young suggests, as being will itself. For example:

Here we see at the very lowest grade the will manifesting itself as a blind impulse, an obscure, dull urge, remote from all direct knowableness. It is the simplest and feeblest mode of its objectification.⁴

1 WWR 1, p. 289(364) (italics mine).

2 WWR 1, p. 289(364) (italics mine).

3 However, it has to be conceded that Schopenhauer is ambiguous on the exact relationship that holds between the thing-in-itself and intelligible characters; a point that I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4.

4 WWR 1, p. 149(201).

Young's identification of character with the natural forces fares no better. For, while acknowledging that both are will, Schopenhauer says that character is a different grade of objectification of the will from the natural forces. Therefore, the two cannot be the same for him. He alludes to this difference in the following passage.

I must recognise the inscrutable forces that manifest themselves in all the bodies of nature as identical in kind with what in me is the will, and as differing from it only in degree . . . I consider the inner being that first imparts meaning and validity to all necessity (i.e., effect from cause) to be its presupposition. In the case of man, this is called character; in the case of stone, it is called quality; but it is the same in both. Where it is immediately known, it is called *will*, and in the stone it has the weakest, and in man the strongest, degree of visibility, of objectivity.¹

A more fundamental difficulty in Young's interpretation is revealed in his comments on an objection raised by Patrick Gardiner concerning the notion of 'privileged access' in Schopenhauer's philosophy. He writes:

While the first-person access to the self does not reveal one's *character* to one, and hence does not reveal the 'inner mechanism' of one's actions, it does reveal many instances of the *kind* of thing character is.²

He goes on to state:

1 WWR 1, p. 126(173).

2 Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 60.

Subjective experience provides one, then, not with direct access to the inner nature of forces, but with, rather a *vocabulary* for describing what, from the objective standpoint, cannot be described.¹

These passages seem to say that our knowledge of will, and hence of the inner nature of the forces, is still incomplete. But Young has already stated that if he is to be consistent with his doctrine of concept-empiricism:

Schopenhauer cannot allow any gap between experience and the metaphysical will. Experience must reach right up to and touch metaphysical reality.²

I conclude that according to Young himself, it is not possible to give an account of these natural forces in terms of objects of possible sense experience. Hence, his interpretation fails to show how Schopenhauer can make scientific discourse meaningful at the level of ultimate explanation.

Young's discussion of the *one* world-will in Schopenhauer's philosophy also requires comment. Young asserts that if Schopenhauer does endorse the inference from the teleological character of phenomenal nature to that of the thing-in-itself, then he is guilty of engaging in transcendent metaphysics. For in claiming to know that the presence of purpose in nature demands a world-will for its explanation, Schopenhauer is claiming knowledge of what Kant says is unknowable. But this point loses its persuasiveness if Schopenhauer rejects the Kantian view that the thing-in-itself is unknowable. Another reason that Young gives for dismissing Schopenhauer's teleological arguments for the existence of one world-will is that they suggest an evil nature for this entity. If ultimate reality has such a nature then there is no possibility of the salvation

1 Ibid., p. 61.

2 Ibid., p. 31.

that Schopenhauer speaks of in Book 4 of *The World as Will and Representation*. This is a genuine difficulty for the traditional interpretation, and shall discuss it further in section 4 of this chapter.

To summarise: There are serious objections to Young's second argument. Both the textual evidence and some of Young's own statements undermine his assertion that for Schopenhauer the will is the non-noumenal essence of the phenomenal world. I agree with Young that Schopenhauer sees the role of metaphysics as one of completing the scientific description of the phenomenal world, but for Schopenhauer the limit of what is knowable extends further than Young allows; it extends to the thing-in-itself, and consequently the role of metaphysics extends beyond the realm of phenomena.

3

Argument 3

Schopenhauer's support for the claims of the mystics is consistent with his belief that there is an ultimate reality that is unknowable to ordinary sensory-intellectual consciousness.

Such a view agrees with the Kantian doctrine that the thing-in-itself (or ultimate reality) is unknowable (at least to ordinary consciousness).

Therefore, Schopenhauer does not claim to know that the thing-in-itself is will.¹

This argument raises a genuine problem for the traditional interpretation. Young notes that Schopenhauer speaks of the ultimately 'negative' character of philosophy.

1 Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, pp. 33-34.

We, however, who consistently occupy the standpoint of philosophy, must be satisfied with a negative knowledge, content to have reached the final landmark of the positive.¹

For those who insist that somehow a positive knowledge is to be acquired of what philosophy can express only negatively, Schopenhauer states that:

Nothing would be left but to refer to that state which is experienced by all who have attained to complete denial of the will, and which is denoted by the names ecstasy, rapture, illumination, union with God, and so on. But such a state cannot really be called knowledge, since it no longer has the form of subject and object; moreover, it is accessible only to one's own experience that cannot be further communicated.²

The state that Schopenhauer is referring to in the above passage is that of mystical awareness.

Now it is precisely here that the mystic proceeds positively, and therefore, from this point, nothing is left but mysticism.³

It is clear that Young is right in claiming that Schopenhauer is not unsympathetic to the idea that there is experiential access to ultimate reality: that he accepts a 'sphere of illuminism'.⁴

The mystics speak of an ultimate reality that is unknowable to the normal rational mind but which is accessible in the state of mystical awareness. They say that this reality cannot be described in terms of any of the elements of sensory-intellectual consciousness because the mystical state is devoid of all

1 WWR 1, p. 410(506). See also WWR 2, p. 612(716).

2 WWR 1, p. 410(506).

3 WWR 2, p. 612(716).

4 Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 34.

sensations, concepts and thoughts. Consequently they claim that their experiences are ineffable.¹ Although this description sits well with Schopenhauer's discussion of ultimate mystical reality,² it conflicts with his doctrine that in subjective introspection we have direct experience of the will as thing-in-itself.

I have demonstrated it [the thing-in-itself] directly, where it immediately lies, namely in the will that reveals itself to everyone immediately as the in-itself of his own phenomenon.³

And Young notes the following passage in which Schopenhauer stresses the separate spheres of illuminism and philosophy:

But philosophy should be communicable knowledge and must, therefore, be rationalism. Accordingly, at the end of my philosophy I have indicated the sphere of illuminism as something that exists but I have guarded against setting even one foot thereon.⁴

So the problem is clear. How can Schopenhauer maintain both of the following?

1. Our only means of access to ultimate reality (the thing-in-itself) is through mystical awareness in which all modes of normal sensory and intellectual knowing are absent.

2. We know through a direct intuition in self-consciousness that the will is the thing-in-itself.

1 See, e.g., Stace, 'The Nature of Mysticism', p. 267.

2 See *WWR* 1, pp. 386-98(477-92), p. 404(499); *WWR* 2, pp. 610-15(714-20).

3 *WWR* 1, p. 503(614).

4 *PP*, 2, p. 10(17), and see Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 34.

Young's solution is of course to deny that Schopenhauer does in fact make the second assertion. But, as argued in sections 1 and 2 of this chapter, I think that this denial is untenable. Nevertheless, it appears equally implausible to deny that Schopenhauer makes the first claim. While, it may be possible to interpret the above claims so that they *are* compatible (Interpretation 3), here I wish only to present the difficulties that Young sees in the traditional interpretation. This brings us to his final argument.

4

Argument 4

Schopenhauer advocates the possibility of salvation from this will-permeated world.

Since the world as will is inalienably permeated with suffering and evil, if the world-in-itself is also the world as will, then suffering is inescapable and salvation is impossible.

Therefore, Schopenhauer does not claim that the thing-in-itself is will.¹

This argument also raises a genuine problem for the traditional interpretation.² Schopenhauer asserts that salvation accompanies the state of

1 Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, pp. 34-35.

2 In this argument Young assumes that those who adopt the traditional interpretation think that by denial of the will Schopenhauer means denial of the phenomenal will only, leaving the will as thing-in-itself intact; hence Young's rejoinder that this leaves no place for the ultimate reality of which the mystics speak. However, later in the same paragraph (page 35 of his book) he writes, 'if the thing-in-itself were will, then to have transcended the will would be to have *passed over into empty nothingness*,' implying that he also considers the possibility of interpreting denial of the will as denial of the will as thing-in-itself (see also pages 129-30). Although Young does not make explicit that there are two ways of considering 'denial of the will', I do not think that this omission materially alters his point. For on the traditional interpretation, which asserts that the thing-in-itself is identical with the will, neither view of denial of the will is compatible with Schopenhauer's belief in an ultimate reality that fits the descriptions of it made by the mystics and which is required for salvation. For if denial of the will is denial of the phenomenal will only, then ultimate reality remains will and there is no possibility of salvation: on the other hand, if denial of the will is denial of the will as thing-in-itself, then salvation is an escape into empty nothingness, making Schopenhauer's regard for the claims of the mystics seem absurd.

denial-of-the-will which, he tells us, is akin to what the Christian mystics have called the 'effect of grace'. That such a state is desirable follows from the fact that all nature is embodied will, whose essence is to strive endlessly. This gives rise to constant struggle and competition between individual phenomena, and the endless, aimless striving means that 'there is no measure or end of suffering.'¹

Young notes that Schopenhauer's advocacy of denial-of-the-will has led some commentators to interpret him as being an 'absolute pessimist' about all possible worlds.² However, Young states that such views are insensitive to the intense theological preoccupation that permeates Book 4 of *The World as Will and Representation* in particular. There Schopenhauer speaks of the parallels between his philosophy and the essence of Christianity. Both are pessimistic, ascetic and life-denying with respect to the phenomenal world, yet affirm the possibility of salvation beyond. This positive hope is supported in Schopenhauer's mind by the writings of the mystics. Young concludes that for Schopenhauer ultimate reality cannot be will.

Young has a further argument to support this point. He notes that for Schopenhauer the thing-in-itself is non-plural, since it lies outside the spatio-temporal framework. But willing, the cause of all suffering, requires a distinction between the subject and object of willing; in other words Young argues that it requires plurality. Therefore, at the level of ultimate reality, there can be no willing. He concludes that this is further evidence that Schopenhauer does not identify the will with the thing-in-itself.³ However, the

1 *WWR* 1, p. 309(388). See also *WWR* 1, pp. 146-47(197), p. 379(469), p. 397(491).

2 Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, pp. 129-30. See also Luis E. Navia, 'Reflections on Schopenhauer's Pessimism', in *Schopenhauer: His Philosophical Achievement*, ed. Michael Fox (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1980), p. 171; Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer*, p. 155.

3 Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 133.

text supports the opposite view. In the following passage Schopenhauer affirms that the will is the thing-in-itself, yet as such it is beyond plurality.

Yet, in pursuit of the whole of our discussion so far, the will itself, as thing-in-itself, is by no means included in that plurality, that change.¹

In the passage below, Schopenhauer makes clear that the inner nature of the will is essentially one of striving.

We have long since recognised this striving, that constitutes the kernel and in-itself of everything, as the same thing that in us, where it manifests itself most distinctly in the light of the fullest consciousness, is called will.²

I conclude that Schopenhauer means that although the will as thing-in-itself is beyond plurality and hence beyond the subject-object divide of the phenomenal world, it nevertheless exhibits an essential nature of endless striving. Although, it is difficult to make literal sense of 'striving' in a non-spatio-temporal reality, the text indicates that Schopenhauer does use this term to describe such a domain; it is the domain of the will as thing-in-itself.

So again we are faced with a seemingly insurmountable problem. How can Schopenhauer maintain both of the following?

1. Our only hope of salvation from this 'vale of tears' is by 'denial-of-the-will'; this gives us access to the ultimate blissful reality of which the mystics speak.

2. Ultimate reality (the-thing-itself) is will. Its nature is to strive endlessly, and the outcome of this in the phenomenal world is inevitable suffering.

1 *WWR* 1, p. 153(204-5).

2 *WWR* 1, p. 309(387). See also *WWR* 1, pp. 146-47(197), p. 379(469), p. 397(491).

Again, Young's solution is to deny that Schopenhauer makes the second assertion. However, this position is not tenable, given the arguments in sections 1 and 2 of this chapter, and the comments that I have made regarding the second argument of this section. While, it may be possible to interpret the above claims so that they *are* compatible (Interpretation 3), here I wish only to present the difficulties that Young sees in the traditional interpretation.

5

My primary purpose in this chapter has been to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Young's interpretation, which asserts that according to Schopenhauer the will is *not* the thing-in-itself, but is the non-noumenal, metaphysical underpinning of the phenomenal world. The main strength of Young's interpretation is the support that it receives from Schopenhauer's views on salvation and mysticism; views that align his thinking more closely with Eastern philosophy. However, Young is unable to give a satisfactory account of Schopenhauer's numerous assertions that *the thing-in-itself is will*, and his first argument fails because it does not take account of what is a key feature of Schopenhauer's epistemology: namely, that awareness of the will as thing-in-itself in self-consciousness is a direct intuition, or 'feeling'. Young's second argument does not succeed because his claim that the will is the non-noumenal essence of all phenomena cannot be made plausible either from the text or the arguments he employs. However, I believe that his interpretation does succeed in bringing out the inadequacy of the traditional view, even if it fails to present a coherent alternative to it. Furthermore, it brings into sharper focus the problems that arise in trying to make Schopenhauer consistent, and in doing so reveals the way in which Schopenhauer's thought was developing.

CHAPTER 4

FREEDOM AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

So far I have considered the various ways in which Schopenhauer's claim that the thing-in-itself is will can be interpreted. I concluded that Interpretations 1 and 2, according to which the thing-in-itself is identical with the will and will-to-live respectively, are clearly the most important to Schopenhauer himself, and that Interpretation 3, according to which the thing-in-itself has multiple aspects, one of which is will, is without doubt the most important in terms of its coherence with Schopenhauer's most fundamental doctrines.

Clearly these interpretations assume that there exists a thing-in-itself and that it is will (in at least one of its aspects). But how does Schopenhauer justify his assumption that there exists a thing-in-itself and that it is will? Furthermore, how does he justify his claim that we can have knowledge of the thing-in-itself and know it as will? Finally, how does he justify his use of language to describe the thing-in-itself? In this and the following chapters I attempt to answer these questions.

In this chapter I consider one of the ways in which Schopenhauer attempts to justify his belief that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will. I argue that his principal reason for this belief is that he thinks that an adequate explanation of human freedom and responsibility requires it. Specifically, he holds that freedom and responsibility presuppose the existence of a non-phenomenal will, and he identifies the non-phenomenal will with Kant's thing-in-itself. To use his own terminology, freedom and responsibility presuppose the existence of the *will as thing-in-itself*. Since he also thinks that freedom and responsibility are preconditions of morality and that the fundamental significance of life is a

moral one, it is imperative for him that his metaphysics can accommodate the possibility of freedom and responsibility. Regarding the moral significance of life he states:

This [ethical significance] goes beyond the mere phenomenal appearance of things, and is most closely connected with the world's entire existence and man's destiny; for the supreme point at which the meaning of existence generally arrives is undoubtedly ethical.¹

Regarding the dependence of morality on the possibility of freedom and responsibility he states:

As I have just shown, the same doctrine of the necessitation of the acts of will renders it necessary for man's existence and essence themselves to be the work of his freedom and consequently of his will and so for this will to have aseity. Thus, as I have shown, on the opposite assumption all responsibility would disappear and the moral world, like the physical, would be a mere machine which its outside constructor set in motion for his own amusement.²

Then we must still take into consideration here, that freedom and responsibility—those pillars on which all morality rests—can certainly be asserted in words without the assumption of the aseity of the will; but that it is absolutely impossible to think them without it.³

In other words, Schopenhauer holds that without human freedom there can be no responsibility; and without responsibility there can be no morality. In the light of this claim, I now turn to an assessment of his assumption that the will

¹ *BM*, p. 200(302). See also *WN*, pp. 373-74(337); *WWR* 1, p. 271(343), *PP* 2, p. 201(219).

² *PP* 2, p. 236(257).

³ *WN*, p. 374(338).

as thing-in-itself is a necessary presupposition to an explanation of human freedom and responsibility.

1

Central to Schopenhauer's philosophy is his doctrine of the primacy of the will in human nature. He states:

With me, that which is eternal and indestructible in man, therefore, that which constitutes his vital principle, is not the soul, but—if I may use a chemical term—its radical: and this is *the will*. The so-called soul is already a compound: it is the union of the will and the intellect. This intellect is the secondary element, the *posterius* of the organism and, as a mere cerebral function, is conditioned by the organism; whereas the will is what is primary, the *prius* of the organism, which is conditioned by it.¹

In keeping with this view, Schopenhauer thinks that the entire contents of our mental world are affections of will.

The knower himself, precisely as such, cannot be known, otherwise he would be the known of another knower. But as the known in self-consciousness we find exclusively the will. For not only willing and deciding in the narrowest sense, but also all striving, wishing, shunning, hoping, fearing, loving, hating, in short all that directly constitutes our own weal and woe, desire and distinction, is obviously only affection of the will, is a striving, a modification, of willing and not-willing, is just that which, when it operates outwards, exhibits itself as an act of will proper . . . Therefore in self-

¹ WN, p. 236(219-20).

consciousness the known, consequently the will, must be the first and original thing; the knower, on the other hand, must be only the secondary thing, that which has been added, the mirror.¹

That we are essentially will, that all aspects of our being are affections of will and that these are felt as either pleasure or pain is also made clear in the following passage.

Further, from the fact that the organism is only the visibility of the will, and thus in itself is this will, I have deduced that every affection of the organism simultaneously and immediately affects the will, in other words, is felt pleasantly or painfully.²

The only exception that Schopenhauer allows concerns the sensations that relate to sight and hearing. While these are affections of will, they are felt neither as pleasant nor painful, a fact that he explains as follows.

Yet through the enhancement of sensibility, with the higher development of the nervous system, there arises the possibility that in the nobler, i. e., *objective*, sense-organs (sight and hearing), the extremely delicate affections appropriate to them are felt without affecting the will immediately and in themselves, in other words, without being painful or pleasant; and that in consequence they appear in consciousness as in themselves indifferent, merely *perceived*, sensations.³

¹ WWR 2, p. 202(235). In a footnote, Schopenhauer comments that 'it is remarkable that Augustine already knew this.'

² WWR 2, p. 275(322).

³ WWR 2, p. 275(322).

The wide sense in which Schopenhauer conceives of willing is made explicit in the following passage. Here he makes clear that our representations and ideas also come under the heading of willing.

The ideas, therefore, are farthest removed from the affections of the will, and since this body is the objectification of the will, these can pass at once into pain through intensification, even in the organs of sense. In accordance with what we have said, representation and idea can also be regarded as the efflorescence of the will, in so far as they spring from the highest perfection and enhancement of the organism.¹

The same doctrine is also alluded to in the following passage.

But knowing, and thus the intellect, presenting itself in self-consciousness wholly as the secondary element, is to be regarded not merely as the will's accident, but also as its work; knowledge is thus by a roundabout way traceable again to the will.²

Schopenhauer thus presents us with a picture of human beings whose essence is will and whose every desire, hope, passion, and even idea and representation of the world, is in the end reducible to an affection of will, an affection that, with the exception of the sensations associated with sight and hearing, we feel either as pleasure or pain. What then does it mean to have an essence that is will? Schopenhauer explains it as follows:

Therefore what is always to be found in every animal consciousness, even the most imperfect and feeblest, in fact what is always its foundation, is the immediate awareness of a *longing*, and of its alternate satisfaction and non-satisfaction in very different degrees . . .

¹ WWR 2, p. 276(323).

² WWR 2, p. 259(302).

Thus we know that the animal *wills*, indeed even *what* it wills, namely existence, well-being, life, and propagation . . . Longing, craving, willing, or aversion, shunning, and not-willing, are peculiar to every consciousness; man has them in common with the polyp. Accordingly, this is the essential and the basis of every consciousness.¹

In other words, because we are essentially will, we are driven by a general longing that shows itself in particular desires and aversions, both of which Schopenhauer calls acts of will. Hence, we are naturally agents in the world rather than mere passive observers; we actively impose ourselves on the world rather than act only in response to outside forces. It follows that it is we who are responsible for our actions, since these arise from and indeed are identical with our essential nature. That Schopenhauer endorses this conclusion is clear from the following passage.

The wholly clear and certain feeling of the responsibility for what we do, of the accountability for our actions . . . rests on the unshakeable certainty that we ourselves are the doers of our deeds.²

To summarise: Schopenhauer holds that our essential nature is will and that all aspects of our inner life, including our ideas and representations, are affections of will which, with the exception of the sensations pertaining to sight and hearing, are felt either as pleasure or pain. Having a nature that is will means that we feel a constant longing that shows itself in particular desires and aversions. We are therefore agents in the world, driven by our inner nature, rather than mere passive observers who simply respond to outside forces. Responsibility for our actions therefore falls upon ourselves, since our

¹ *WWR* 2, p. 204(237-38).

² *FW*, p. 94(134).

actions arise from and indeed are identical with our essential nature, which is will.

2

The primacy of the will in human nature is a fundamental and characteristically Schopenhauerian doctrine. Another doctrine that he maintains with equal fervour, but which he takes over from Kant, is that of universal determinism in nature, according to which all events, including human actions, arise of necessity from antecedent conditions. Like Kant, he maintains that the reason that the phenomenal world is thoroughly determined is that our minds structure our experience according to the a priori form or category of causality.¹ By making empirical reality mind-dependent in this way, both Schopenhauer and Kant believe that they can reconcile the basic truths of science with the possibility of a priori truths, with free will and with moral responsibility.

Schopenhauer characterises a cause as 'an antecedent change that makes the following one necessary'.² He maintains that in addition to this sequence of changes there must be something upon which the cause acts to produce a change at a particular time and place and on a particular being. The change always corresponds to the nature of that being, and the latter must already have force sufficient to produce it. Therefore, every effect arises from both an inner and an outer factor. The inner factor is the original force of the being that is acted upon, and the outer factor is the determining or occasional cause that compels the original force to manifest itself in a particular way.³ Schopenhauer holds that in the case of inorganic matter and plant life, the

¹ However, whereas for Kant the category of causality is one of the twelve a priori concepts through which an object is thought, for Schopenhauer our knowledge of causality is a pre-condition to all knowledge of objects, since it is the means by which perception of objects is possible at all (see Appendix 1).

² *FW*, p. 47(85).

³ *FW*, pp. 47-48(85). See also *WWR* 1, p. 138(187).

original forces include electricity, gravity, impenetrability, cohesion, rigidity, hardness, inertia, weight and elasticity, as well as other unspecified forces that underlie chemical affinities.¹ Concerning the determining causes, he maintains that in inorganic matter they are mechanical, physical and chemical changes,² and that in plant life they are the changes brought about by the presence of stimuli such as heat, light, air, nourishment, chemicals, fertilisation and other contact.³

In the case of humans and other animals, Schopenhauer asserts that the original force is will, which we know both from the outside, in the way that we know other natural forces, and from the inside by way of self-consciousness, immediately. And he calls the specific and individual pattern of each person's willing their empirical character.⁴ He holds that the determining causes that are characteristic of humans and other animals possessing consciousness are motives, which he describes as causes that pass through cognition.⁵ In humans, they include both the immediately present objects of perception as well as abstract thoughts and ideas, while for animals they are restricted to the former.⁶

In his explanation of causality Schopenhauer makes the above distinctions between inorganic, plant, and human life. However, he insists that humans differ from other living things only in their higher degree of physical complexity.⁷ All are phenomena in space and time and, in accordance with his doctrine that the phenomenal world is created by the operation of the law of

¹ *FW*, p. 48(85-86).

² *FW*, pp. 30-31(68-69).

³ *FW*, pp. 31-32(70).

⁴ He thinks that animals lack individual character, but instead partake in the character of their species (See *WWR* 1, p. 220(280-81)).

⁵ *FW*, pp. 32-33(70-71).

⁶ *FW*, pp. 34-36(72-75).

⁷ *FW*, p. 46(84).

causality, all are equally subject to that law. The following passage summarises his position.

The conduct or action of all beings in this world appears always strictly necessitated by the causes that in each case call it forth. It makes no difference in this respect whether such conduct or action has been called forth by causes in the narrowest sense of the word, or by stimuli, or finally by motives, since these differences refer only to the degree of susceptibility of the different kinds of beings. We must have no illusion on this point: the law of causality knows of no exceptions, but everything, from the movement of a mote in a sunbeam to the well-considered action of man, is subject to it with equal strictness . . . No truth is more certain than this, namely that all that happens, be it great or small, happens with complete necessity.¹

I argued above that for Schopenhauer our essential nature is will, that this entails that we feel a constant longing, and that such longing shows itself in specific desires and aversions, or acts of will. I further argued that his doctrine of the primacy of the will in human nature means that it is we who are responsible for our actions. However, this doctrine appears to be incompatible with Schopenhauer's doctrine of universal causality. For, that doctrine entails that human actions are just as determined by antecedent conditions as are all other events, as the above passage makes clear. Accordingly, it suggests that we are not ultimately responsible for our actions.

Schopenhauer acknowledges that it is often more difficult to discern the causes of human actions than to discern those that govern plant and inorganic life. However, he thinks that this difference arises merely from the fact that in

¹ WWR 2, p. 319(373).

the last two cases the causes are palpable, whereas in the case of humans, the causes may be raised to the level of mere thoughts that are no longer visible.¹ In keeping with his view that human actions are as determined by antecedent causes as are all other occurrences in nature, Schopenhauer notes that just as it makes no sense to say of water lying quietly in a reflecting pool that in identical circumstances it could have made high waves or gushed downwards, so it makes no sense to say of a human being behaving in a certain way that in identical circumstances he or she could have behaved differently. In both cases, once the cause is present, its effect cannot fail to occur.²

Nonetheless, Schopenhauer acknowledges that in the case of voluntary actions we possess a natural belief that in identical circumstances we could have behaved differently if we had so chosen. In other words, we believe that antecedent conditions do not totally determine our actions. He thinks that this belief rests on two sources of confusion. First, we mistakenly take our awareness that 'we can do what we will' as evidence that our actions are not determined by antecedent conditions. He argues that this uncontroversial fact of consciousness says nothing at all about whether our will is undetermined or free. Instead, it shows only that we have the ability to act in accordance with our will,³ and it leaves unanswered the question of whether we can will our volitions, and if so whether we can also will that which we will to will, and so on. These questions concern the grounds of willing; and according to Schopenhauer, self-consciousness does not reveal those grounds. It reveals the willing, but not the grounds that determine it.⁴ He thinks that it is because as humans we are primarily practical rather than theoretical beings that we are much more distinctly conscious of the active part of our volitions, namely their

¹ Ibid.

² *FW*, p. 43(81).

³ *FW*, p. 16(55).

⁴ *FW*, p. 18(56-57).

effectiveness, than of the passive aspect, namely their dependence. For this reason, he thinks, the untutored mind finds it difficult to grasp that the problem of free will concerns not whether we can do what we will, but rather whether our willing itself is free. He puts the issue as follows. 'Does it [our willing] depend on nothing at all or on something?'¹ To imagine that it depends upon nothing at all, he contends, is to make every human action an inexplicable miracle, an effect without a cause.² In keeping with his deterministic view of nature, he argues instead that human willing is as determined by antecedent causes as are all other occurrences.³ In short, he argues that self-conscious awareness that 'we can do what we will' provides no evidence that our will is free.

While this purely negative result leaves open the question of the freedom of the will, Schopenhauer argues that it is more plausible to suppose that our willing is determined by antecedent causes than to accept that our willing is an effect that has no cause at all, an inexplicable miracle.

Schopenhauer identifies two sources of confusion that in the case of voluntary actions give rise to our natural belief that in identical circumstances we could have behaved differently. The first is our self-conscious awareness that we can do what we will. The second is the fact that as humans we are capable of deliberation. Schopenhauer asserts that when we deliberate we consider competing abstract motives, and he thinks that this capacity gives us a far greater choice of actions than is possible for animals, and an accordingly greater relative freedom. For, in contrast to animals, we are free from the immediate compulsion of the perceptually present objects that act as motives on our will. Schopenhauer states that this relative freedom is probably 'what

¹ *FW*, p. 19(58).

² *FW*, p. 47(84).

³ *FW*, p. 40(78).

educated yet not deeply thinking people understand by the freedom of the will'. However, he insists that this freedom is not absolute, since abstract motives, or mere thoughts, are also determining causes of the will. He contends that what happens in deliberation is that 'motives try out repeatedly, against one another, their effectiveness on the will', until 'finally the decidedly strongest motive drives the others from the field and determines the will.' He adds that 'this outcome is called resolve, and it takes place with complete necessity as the result of the struggle.' Consequently, the outcome of deliberation is as determined by antecedent causes as all other events.¹

To summarise: Schopenhauer subscribes to the doctrine of universal determinism in nature, according to which all events are determined by antecedent conditions. This doctrine entails that in the case of human behaviour, once the relevant conditions are present, our actions follow with the same necessity as that with which inanimate objects respond to mechanical pushes. Accordingly, he holds that despite our natural belief that antecedent conditions do not totally determine our actions, and that in identical circumstances we could behave differently if we so chose, we must conclude that our actions are as determined by antecedent conditions as are all other events in nature. I noted that this conclusion suggests that we are not responsible for our actions.

3

It follows from what has been said that Schopenhauer presents us with two *prima facie* incompatible theses. On the one hand, what drives our activity are our own acts of will, thus making the responsibility for our actions our own. On the other hand, our actions, like all other occurrences in nature are

¹ *FW*, p. 37(75).

completely determined by antecedent causes, thus suggesting that we are not ultimately responsible for our actions. Can these two theses be made compatible?

Schopenhauer believes that they can, and his solution invokes the Kantian distinction between the empirical and intelligible character. However, since Schopenhauer's argument differs from Kant's in several respects I begin by outlining Kant's argument for this distinction and then discuss the ways in which Schopenhauer's argument differs from it.

In the third antinomy of his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant tries to show that reason's constant search for an unconditioned first cause results in a contradiction, leading us to maintain the following two incompatible theses. One, if all things have a cause, then all causality is in time and under the laws of nature. Two, if all things have a cause, there must be a cause which is not an event in time and under the laws of nature.¹ Kant attempts to resolve this antinomy by showing that both theses may be true if their respective scopes are distinguished. However, he makes it clear that his proposed solution has only modest pretensions. He states:

What we have alone been able to show, and what we have alone been concerned to show, is that this antinomy rests on a sheer illusion, and that causality through freedom is at least not incompatible with nature.²

The reason for Kant's cautious words is that the freedom he refers to is what he calls a transcendental idea. As such, it is a mere a priori concept whose real ground is impossible to know. Consequently, he thinks that while we cannot

¹ *CPR*, A444/B473-A446/B474, pp. 409-11.

² *CPR*, A558/B586, p. 479.

help believing that such freedom exists, its reality cannot be established, nor its possibility proved.¹ Nevertheless, he thinks that its possibility can be thought, and in a way that is at least not incompatible with nature. The importance of demonstrating this possibility lies in the connection that Kant sees between freedom and morality.

With reference to human experience, Kant defines freedom in two ways, one negative, one positive. According to the negative definition, freedom is the mere absence of external coercion on a rational being's will. However, concerning its positive form, the form that is embodied in the transcendental idea of freedom, Kant says of it that it is a much richer and more fruitful concept. It refers to the autonomy of the will according to which the will is not bound by the laws governing the rest of nature.² Instead it can act according to its own law, which for Kant is the categorical imperative, the law of moral action. The connection which he sees between this positive concept of freedom and morality is made clear in his words, 'Thus, a free will and a will under moral laws are one and the same.'³ He adds that freedom, conceived in its negative form, is not sufficient to ground morality, since an agent whose actions are merely free from external constraints cannot be held accountable for them, given that such actions are as subject to natural necessity as all other events in nature.

And if the freedom of our will were nothing else than the latter, i.e., psychological and comparative and not at the same time also transcendental or absolute, it would in essence be no better than the

¹ Ibid.

² See *CPR*, A553/B581, p. 476; *CPracR*, pp. 99-101; *GM*, p. 114.

³ *GM*, p. 114.

freedom of a turnspit, which when once wound up also carries out its motions of itself.¹

However, while Kant's positive account of freedom, according to which an agent's will can be conceived as autonomous and subject only to its own law, is consistent with the attribution of responsibility to the agent, it appears incompatible with his belief in the doctrine of universal determinism in nature. For if all events, including human actions, are determined by antecedent conditions, there appears to be no place for an autonomous will whose actions are not determined by anything outside it. Hence, Kant's objective is to show that his positive conception of freedom is at least not incompatible with universal determinism, and thereby to show the possibility of responsibility and hence of morality. He tries to achieve this objective by introducing the idea of the *intelligible character*. By 'intelligible', Kant means 'whatever in an object of the senses is not itself appearance'.²

He asserts that each subject can be conceived of as having both an empirical character and an intelligible character, explaining these terms in the following passage.

Every efficient cause must have a *character*, that is, a law of its causality, without which it would not be a cause. On the above supposition, we should, therefore, in a subject belonging to the sensible world have, first, an *empirical character*, whereby its actions, as appearances, stand in thoroughgoing connection with other appearances in accordance with unvarying laws of nature. And since these actions can be derived from the other appearances, they constitute together with them a single series in the order of nature.

¹ *CPracR*, p. 101.

² *CPR*, A538/B566, p. 467.

Secondly, we should also have to allow the subject an *intelligible character*, by which it is indeed the cause of those same actions [in their quality] as appearances, but which does not itself stand under any conditions of sensibility, and is not itself appearance. We can entitle the former the character of the thing-in-itself in the [field of] appearance, and the latter its character as thing-in-itself.¹

In other words, according to Kant, we can consider ourselves as having both an intelligible and an empirical character, both of which are causes of our actions as appearances. However, while the empirical character is determined by antecedent conditions, the intelligible character is conceived of as uncaused. It lies outside temporal determinations, and therefore cannot be said to arise from antecedent conditions. Kant puts his position succinctly as follows:

No action begins in this active being itself; but we may yet quite correctly say that the active being of itself begins its effects in the sensible world.²

Having shown how his positive conception of freedom may be at least 'not incompatible' with universal determinism in nature, Kant then gives the following example to illustrate the way in which his solution bears upon the issue of moral responsibility. He cites the case of a voluntary action such as a malicious lie, maintaining that while we might accept that the culprit's action may be influenced by such mitigating circumstances as a defective education, bad company, a vicious disposition or other causes, we nevertheless blame him. We do so because we believe that in spite of these influences, he nevertheless initiates the action and could have acted differently. Kant says:

¹ CPR, A539/B567, pp. 467-68.

² CPR, A541/B569, p. 469.

Our blame is based on a law of reason whereby we regard reason as a cause that irrespective of all the above-mentioned empirical conditions could have determined, and ought to have determined, the agent to act otherwise. This causality of reason we do not regard as only a co-operating agency, but as complete in itself, even when the sensuous impulses do not favour but are directly opposed to it; the action is ascribed to the agent's intelligible character; in the moment when he utters the lie, the guilt is entirely his. Reason, irrespective of all empirical conditions of the act, is completely free, and the lie is entirely due to its default.¹

In other words, we attribute moral responsibility to the agent because in his intelligible character he possesses the freedom to initiate actions independently of the determining causes that govern his actions at the empirical level.

In outline that is Kant's argument for the possibility of human freedom. Schopenhauer's argument differs from it in at least two important respects. First, while Schopenhauer agrees with Kant that moral responsibility requires the freedom of self-determination, and that as agents we cannot help but believe that we possess such freedom, he rejects Kant's method of arguing for its possibility. Whereas Kant is content merely to show how such freedom is possible, Schopenhauer claims that we know this freedom to be actual. He contends that we are directly aware of it in self-consciousness when we confront our inner nature, the non-phenomenal will, which he identifies with Kant's thing-in-itself. He brings out this difference with Kant in the following two passages. In the first he rejects Kant's method.

¹ *CPR*, A555/B583, p. 477.

By failing to recognise and overlooking this immediate origin of the concept of freedom in every human consciousness, Kant now places the origin of that concept in a very subtle speculation. Thus through this speculation, the unconditioned, to which our reason (*Vernunft*) must always tend, leads to the hypostatising of the concept of freedom, and the practical concept of freedom is supposed to be based first of all on this transcendent Idea of freedom. In the *Critique of Practical Reason* . . . he again derives this last concept differently, namely from the fact that the categorical imperative presupposes it. Accordingly, he says that the speculative Idea is only the primary source of the concept of freedom for the sake of this presupposition, but that here it really obtains significance and application. Neither, however, is the case; for the delusion of a perfect freedom of the individual in his particular actions is most vivid in the conviction of the least cultured person who has never reflected. It is therefore not founded on any speculation, though it is often assumed by speculation from without. On the other hand, only philosophers, and indeed the profoundest of them, and also the most thoughtful and enlightened authors of the Church, are free from the delusion.

In the second passage, which immediately follows the above passage, Schopenhauer goes on to argue that the concept of freedom has its origin in our consciousness of our inner being, the will as thing-in-itself. He also explains why it is that most people wrongly attribute freedom to their individual actions rather than to their essential nature. He says:

Therefore it follows from all that has been said that the real origin of the concept of freedom is in no way essentially an inference either from the speculative Idea of an unconditioned cause, or from the fact that the categorical imperative presupposes it, but springs directly

from consciousness. In consciousness everyone recognises himself at once as the will, in other words, as that which, as thing-in-itself, has not the principle of sufficient reason for its form, and itself depends on nothing, but rather everything else depends on it. Not everyone, however, recognises himself at once with the critical and reflective insight of philosophy as a definite phenomenon of this will which has already entered time, one might say as an act of will distinguished from that will-to-live itself. Therefore, instead of recognising his whole existence as an act of his freedom, he looks for freedom rather in his individual actions.¹

In brief, Schopenhauer agrees with Kant that as agents we cannot help believing that we possess the freedom of self-determination. However, he differs from Kant in that he thinks that our conviction rests upon direct experience in self-consciousness of the non-phenomenal will, which he identifies with Kant's thing-in-itself.

I indicated earlier that Schopenhauer's argument differs from that of Kant in at least two important respects. The second difference is that he rejects Kant's account of a causal relationship between the intelligible and empirical characters, and the associated doctrines concerning the role of reason, the derivation of ought from the idea of intelligible freedom, and the doctrine of the categorical imperative. Instead, he holds that the empirical character is the phenomenal objectification of the intelligible character, and the latter is an act of the will as thing-in-itself. In the following passage Schopenhauer praises Kant for making the distinction and then goes on to describe how it fits into his own metaphysics.

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 504(615-16).

Kant, however, whose merit in this regard is specially great, was the first to demonstrate the coexistence of this necessity with the freedom of the will in itself, i. e., outside the phenomenon, for he established the difference between the intelligible and empirical characters. I wholly support this distinction, for the former is the will as thing-in-itself, in so far as it appears in a definite individual in a definite degree, while the latter is this phenomenon itself as it manifests itself in the mode of action according to time, and in the physical structure according to space. To make the relation between the two clear, the best expression is that already used in the introductory essay, namely that the intelligible character of every man is to be regarded as an act of will outside time, and thus indivisible and unalterable. The phenomenon of this act of will, developed and drawn out in time, space, and all the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, is the empirical character as it exhibits itself for experience in the man's whole manner of action and course of life.¹

The implication of this passage is that as mere phenomena our actions are determined by antecedent conditions and hence we are not responsible for them. However, in virtue of our intelligible character, which Schopenhauer contends is the condition and basis of our empirical character,² we *are* responsible for our actions. For our actions have their origin in our intelligible character, which is an expression of the will as thing-in-itself. Being non-phenomenal the intelligible character is uncaused, and is thereby the unique source of our actions. By thus invoking the distinction between the intelligible and empirical characters, Schopenhauer believes that he is able to reconcile his theory of agency, according to which we are the unique source of our actions,

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 289(364). See also *WWR* 1, pp. 155-56(208).

² *FW*, p. 97(137).

with his belief in universal determinism, according to which our actions arise from antecedent conditions. Furthermore, he believes that the distinction provides an explanation for our *conviction* that we are free: this arises from our *direct awareness* in self-consciousness of the non-phenomenal will; that is the will as thing-in-itself.¹

To summarise: Schopenhauer attempts to reconcile his theory of agency with his belief in universal determinism by invoking the Kantian distinction between the empirical and intelligible characters. In so far as we are merely phenomena, our actions are determined by antecedent conditions. However, in virtue of our intelligible character, we are the unique source of our actions and are therefore responsible for them. Schopenhauer's account of human freedom and responsibility nevertheless differs from Kant's in two respects. First, whereas Kant is content to establish that freedom is merely possible, Schopenhauer believes that he has demonstrated it to be actual; for it is, he thinks, present to human awareness when we introspect our inner nature, the non-phenomenal will or will as thing-in-itself. Second, whereas Kant suggests a causal relation between the intelligible and empirical characters, a relation that emphasises the role of reason, the notion of ought and the doctrine of the categorical imperative, Schopenhauer holds that the empirical character is the phenomenal objectification of the intelligible character, and the latter is an act of the will as thing-in-itself. Both these differences from Kant emphasise the importance for Schopenhauer of the will as thing-in-itself as a necessary presupposition to his explanation of human freedom and responsibility.

¹ See *WWR* 1, p. 504(615-16), p. 13; *MSR* 2, p. 486(419-20). In his work *On the Freedom of the Will*, p. 99(139), Schopenhauer also alludes to this direct awareness, although much more cautiously, saying that this freedom 'is not easily accessible to our knowledge'.

I turn to the assessment of Schopenhauer's assumption that the existence of the will as thing-in-itself is a necessary presupposition to an adequate explanation of human freedom and responsibility. I argue that it is not clear that his explanation requires the existence of the will that is thing-in-itself; rather, it seems only to require that each of us has an intelligible character that is will. I conclude that his explanation does not establish that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will.

Schopenhauer says of the relationship that exists between the intelligible character and the will as thing-in-itself that the intelligible character 'is the will as thing-in-itself in so far as it appears in a definite individual in a definite degree', and that it is 'an act of will outside time and thus indivisible and unalterable'.¹ In another passage he says:

In this way of acting, his [a man's] empirical character reveals itself, but in this again is revealed his intelligible character, i.e., the will in itself, of which he is the determined phenomenon.²

While it is not altogether clear from these passages whether the intelligible character is distinct from the will as thing-in-itself or whether it is in some way a part of it, the most plausible interpretation is that the intelligible character is an objectification of the will as thing-in-itself and is therefore distinct from it. I have two reasons for saying this. First, in stating that the intelligible character is an 'act of will' Schopenhauer at least suggests that the intelligible character is a creation of the will and is therefore distinct from it. Second, Schopenhauer claims elsewhere that each individual is the manifestation of a separate Idea that

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 289(364).

² *WWR* 1, p. 287(362).

constitutes his or her character,¹ and that each Idea is a grade of objectification of the will that does not enter into space and time.² I conclude that the intelligible character is similar to the will as thing-in-itself in that it exists outside of space and time,³ but that it differs from it in that it is not unique: each of us has his or her own. Nevertheless, as the following passage indicates, Schopenhauer himself seems less than clear on the exact relationship between the two.

Further, it may be asked how deeply in the being-in-itself of the world do the roots of individuality go. In any case, the answer to this might be that they go as deeply as the affirmation of the will-to -live; where the denial of the will occurs, they cease, for with the affirmation they sprang into existence.⁴

In other words, if it is granted that the roots of individuality begin with the intelligible character, then Schopenhauer is undecided on the extent to which intelligible character is distinct from the non-individuated will as thing-in-itself.

Given the strong Kantian influence on Schopenhauer's explanation of human freedom and responsibility, it is worth looking briefly at Kant's account of the relationship between the intelligible character and the thing-in-itself. In the following passage he appears to identify them.

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 158(211). See also *WWR* 1, p. 156(208), p. 158(211), p. 220(280), p. 224(285).

² *WWR* 1, p. 129(177); *WWR* 1, pp. 170-72(222-25).

³ *WWR* 1, pp. 158-59(211-12). Although in this passage Schopenhauer stresses only that the intelligible character is non-temporal, I think that it is reasonable to assume he also takes it to be non-spatial, since according to him, space as well as time exist only as forms of phenomena.

⁴ *WWR* 2, p. 641(751); *PP* 2, p. 227(248). It is worth noting in passing that whereas the existence of multiple intelligible characters presents a problem for Schopenhauer, given that he thinks that the thing-in-itself is beyond plurality, this is not a problem for Kant who allows the possibility of multiple things-in-themselves.

Now this acting subject would not, in its intelligible character, stand under any condition of time; time is only a condition of appearances, not of things in themselves.¹

This passage suggests that for Kant the intelligible character presupposes the thing-in-itself because the two are identical. But while Kant's influence may thus partly explain Schopenhauer's assumption that the intelligible character presupposes the thing-in-itself, it cannot justify it. For, the identification of the intelligible character with the thing-in-itself is much more problematical in Schopenhauer's metaphysics. Furthermore, whereas Kant allows the possibility of multiple things-in-themselves, and can thereby accommodate multiple intelligible characters, Schopenhauer insists that the thing-in-itself is beyond plurality. Consequently, it cannot be identified with the multiple intelligible characters.

Schopenhauer's characterisation of the relationship between the intelligible character and the will as thing-in-itself is less than explicit. Nevertheless, despite this obscurity, it is clear from the discussion in Section 4 that he believes that the existence of the intelligible character relies upon the existence of the will as thing-in-itself of which it is either an objectification or in some sense a part.

However, it is still not clear why Schopenhauer believes that in addition to intelligible characters there must be the will as thing-in-itself. For it seems that only the former are required for his explanation of freedom and responsibility. His claim that the concept of freedom has its origin in our consciousness could be accommodated just as well on the view that introspection yields awareness

¹ *CPR*, A539/B567, p. 468. See also *CPR*, A538/B566, p. 467. Although I have not undertaken a search of all Kant's works to establish whether he always writes as if the intelligible character is to be identified with a thing-in-itself, Janaway makes the comment that Kant sometimes identifies them and sometimes does not (see Janaway, *Self and World*, p. 91).

of the intelligible character as on the view that it yields awareness of the will as thing-in-itself. For, according to Schopenhauer, both the intelligible character and the will as thing-in-itself are instances of non-phenomenal willing and hence both possess the freedom of self-determination. His claim that we are morally responsible requires only that the intelligible character is the condition and basis of our empirical character; and it would seem that this condition can be met without the existence of the will as thing-in-itself. In other words, according to Schopenhauer's own characterisation of intelligible character, it seems that it alone is sufficient to accommodate his explanation of human freedom and responsibility. Hence, while he assumes the existence of a will that is thing-in-itself as a necessary element in that explanation, his assumption is not well supported; *a fortiori* his assumption that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will is similarly lacking in support.

It is, however, unlikely that such considerations would have moved Schopenhauer to abandon his belief that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will. For he also holds that this belief is a necessary presupposition to an adequate explanation of morally good behaviour, of self-conscious awareness, of our experience of a public world, of the particular features of phenomena, of perception, of the significance of phenomena, and of teleology in nature, all of which I shall discuss in later chapters. In the meantime, I wish to look at other objections that can be brought against his explanation of human freedom and responsibility; objections that have only an indirect bearing upon his assertion that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will. It is important to look at these objections, given Schopenhauer's belief that freedom and responsibility are prerequisites of morality, and that the fundamental significance of life is moral.

The additional objections to Schopenhauer's theory can be grouped under two headings; first, those that concern his metaphysics, second, those that concern ethical aspects of his theory. I begin with the former.

As a first objection, it might be argued that there is no need to appeal to the intelligible character in order to explain human behaviour, since the latter can be predicted purely on the basis of their determining causes. In reply, Schopenhauer could make the following two points. First, and most importantly, he could argue that our experience of being morally responsible for our actions requires that there is an aspect to us that lies outside the chain of causes and effects that governs the phenomenal world; consequently, to refer only to phenomenal causes is to provide an inadequate account of human experience. Second, he might draw a parallel with science. Just as science, in explaining causal sequences appeals to the forces of nature as pre-conditions of such sequences, so we might appeal to something other than determining causes in order to explain human behaviour.¹

A second objection is that, since there is no direct sensory evidence for the existence of intelligible characters, Schopenhauer is not entitled to posit their existence. To this objection two points may be made. First, Schopenhauer is not alone in appealing to a non-perceptible reality to resolve problems that arise from our experience of the perceptible world. Other philosophers appeal to 'possible worlds' in order to explain the meaning of necessity and possibility, or to universals in an attempt to explain how different tokens can be instances of the same type. Scientists make similar moves: They appeal to such non-perceptible entities as forces of nature, space and time in order to provide

¹ See *WWR* 1, pp. 80-81(121-22).

explanations for the way in which the perceptible world works. The second point is that to restrict explanations to what is observable by the senses on the grounds that we have no direct evidence of any other kind of reality is to be too quick in discounting the claims that are made, not only by Schopenhauer but also by other philosophers, that direct experience of such a reality is possible. For example, Descartes held that while the clear and distinct idea that we possess of the existence of our mind does not originate in the senses, it is nevertheless the best possible evidence that we could have for the mind's existence.¹

A third objection concerns Schopenhauer's claim that the intelligible character is 'an act of will outside time'. A number of commentators have noted that it is difficult to understand what is meant by the expression 'an act of will outside time', given that the notion of an 'act' is usually tied to time.² While allowing that this is a difficulty, in Schopenhauer's defence it can be said that the relationship that exists between the will as thing-in-itself and the intelligible character is no more mysterious than other conceptions that philosophers and scientists have employed when trying to explain puzzling features of our experience. For example, such philosophers as Descartes and Locke hold that the relationship between attributes and substance is one of *inherence*; yet it is difficult to grasp how attributes such as extension can inhere in something that lacks extension.³ Dualists assert that non-spatial minds *interact* with spatial bodies; but what can be meant by non-spatial interaction? Cosmologists talk of space and time as *arising* out of a singularity;

¹ René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and the Meditations*, 'Discourse 4', trans. F. E. Sutcliffe (London: Penguin Classics, 1968), p. 54.

² Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, p. 127; Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, p. 206; Janaway, *Self and World*, p. 244; Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer*, p. 124.

³ *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards, 1967 edn., s. v. 'Substance and Attribute', by D. J. O'Connor.

yet how can space and time arise from the non-spatio-temporal?¹ It seems that in each of these examples the relationship in question must be *sui generis* and the language used to describe it non-literal. That Schopenhauer is aware of the difficulty of using temporal terms to describe the non-temporal and its relations is suggested by the passages that I mentioned in Interpretation 5, where he says that all language used to describe the thing-in-itself is metaphorical. While these considerations do not remove the difficulty of understanding what it is to be an act of will outside time, and hence of understanding the relationship between the will as thing-in-itself and the intelligible character, they do at least suggest that Schopenhauer's claims cannot simply be dismissed as unintelligible.²

6

Having considered three objections that concern metaphysical aspects of Schopenhauer's doctrine of human freedom and responsibility, I turn now to objections that focus on ethical aspects of his theory. The first objection is that, even if we grant the intelligibility of intelligible character, its existence is not required, since other theories provide a better solution to the problem of human freedom and responsibility. In reply, it is fair to say that while other theories have their adherents, others find them either counter-intuitive or unsatisfactory on other grounds. The hard determinist solution preserves our belief in universal determinism but only at the cost of asserting that our conviction of being morally responsible is based on an illusion; a result that many find highly counter-intuitive.³ The simple libertarian solution wishes to

¹ Paul Davies, *The Runaway Universe* (London: Dent, 1978), p. 31.

² I leave a more detailed discussion of the justification for using language to talk about the thing-in-itself and its relationship to the phenomenal world to Chapter 9.

³ William H. Halvorsen, *A Concise Introduction to Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 250-51; Richard Taylor, *Metaphysics*, 3rd edn. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1983), pp. 39-41.

preserve moral responsibility, but can do so only at the cost of considering some human actions to be uncaused. But in the case of such actions, it seems absurd to attribute responsibility to the person whose body it is that acts; for that person is not the cause of those acts.¹ The soft determinist solution accepts both that we are morally responsible for our actions and that universal determinism is true. However, it achieves this reconciliation only by defining what is required for moral responsibility in a way that many, including Kant and Schopenhauer, have found unsatisfactory. It asserts that we can be held morally responsible for our actions provided they arise from our own volitions, free from external coercion or restraint. Against this many have argued that while it is a necessary condition for moral responsibility, it is not sufficient. For if determinism is true, our volitions are themselves determined by antecedent causes outside us, and therefore we cannot be held morally responsible for them.

Perhaps the theory that comes closest to Schopenhauer's is the Agency Theory, according to which some causal chains begin with agents themselves. In such cases the agent can be held morally responsible for her actions since she is their unique source. However, this theory is open to the objection that its conception of the self as a being that can cause an event without itself being subject to antecedent causes is both obscure and controversial.² Schopenhauer's conception of the intelligible character which, like the self of the Agency Theory, is the unique source of the agent's actions, is open to similar objections. However, because the intelligible character is non-phenomenal, its introduction by Schopenhauer allows him to avoid the further objection made against the Agency Theory that it can only accommodate the freedom of self-determination at the cost of abandoning universal determinism.

¹ Taylor, *Metaphysics*, pp. 44-46.

² Taylor, *Metaphysics*, pp. 48-50.

In the light of the difficulties that each of the above theories generates and the consequent lack of an agreed solution to the problem of human freedom and responsibility, Schopenhauer's own solution, which invokes the intelligible character, is at least worthy of consideration and cannot be dismissed on the grounds that other theories have proved themselves superior.

A second objection to ethical aspects of Schopenhauer's theory is that in appealing to the intelligible character to account for our conviction that we are morally responsible for our actions, it assumes that this conviction is justified. However, since it may simply stem from our ignorance of the causal ancestry of our actions, the objection is made that Schopenhauer's conclusion is at best only one of several hypotheses that may account for our conviction.¹ To this objection Schopenhauer could reply that explanations must start from the facts of experience. That we are responsible for our voluntary actions, he could assert, is a basic, rock bottom and indubitable fact of experience, and one that is strongly borne witness to by the intuitions of most people. Consequently, he could argue that any theory seeking to undermine such a fundamental conviction is unsatisfactory. Schopenhauer's position might be compared to that of Moore concerning theories rejecting the independent reality of external objects. Both philosophers may be thought of as arguing that their respective convictions are so fundamental that they are not open to revision. To the extent that we agree with Schopenhauer that the conviction of moral responsibility is rock bottom and beyond revision, we must accept that his explanation is at least worthy of consideration.

A third objection is that Schopenhauer's solution commits him to the unintelligible notion that praise and blame of someone's character is praise and

¹ See Janaway, *Self and World*, pp. 243-45.

blame of the thing-in-itself,¹ and that to apply praise and blame to the thing-in-itself is in any event not to apply them to one's own self or to the self of others. I have two points to make against this objection. The relationship holding between the intelligible character and the thing-in-itself is not altogether clear in Schopenhauer's metaphysics. Nevertheless, I argued that the intelligible character is most plausibly interpreted as an objectification of the will as thing-in-itself and as therefore ontologically distinct from it. On this view, since our intelligible character is the ground of our empirical self, there is a clear sense in which praise and blame when directed to our intelligible character do apply to ourselves, or to the selves of others. However, even granting this, there is a further objection to the application of praise and blame to the intelligible character. It is that we do not normally praise and blame individuals for features of themselves, such as their height and colour of hair, which they cannot help having. Yet it seems that our intelligible character is just such a feature: it is not something that we choose, since its existence is logically prior to the possibility of choice. Furthermore, since Schopenhauer insists that it lies outside of time and is therefore not subject to change, we cannot be praised or blamed for bringing about any such supposed change in it.

In reply I have two points to make. First, while praising and blaming an intelligible character that we cannot help having appears incompatible with our standard use of these words, Schopenhauer is fully aware of the apparent incompatibility. In his essay *On the Freedom of the Will* he discusses the common conviction that an agent in identical circumstances could have acted otherwise.² He argues that this conviction rests upon a confusion, and that wiser heads have always realised that another action would have been possible

¹ See Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, pp. 207-8.

² *FW*, p. 20(58-59).

only if the individual had been another person.¹ The implication of this is that our common conceptions of praise and blame are erroneous. For if our actions arise from an unchangeable character, it makes no sense to praise or blame ourselves on the grounds that we could have acted otherwise. Rather, praise and blame are purely descriptive forms of language that refer to a person's character and which reflect the speaker's values. Consequently, to praise a person for being generous is to say two things: that the person's character is such that he or she gives willingly to those in need, and that this is considered a good thing. It is not to imply that two or more actions are equally possible and that the person is praised for the choice that he or she makes. Schopenhauer's recognition of the incompatibility between the common-sense view and his own does not of course prove that he is right. Furthermore, some have argued that the static conception of character that underlies his views on praise and blame is both unprovable and implausible.²

However that may be, it is worth noting that his views on praise and blame are consistent with his doctrine that punishment is only justified on grounds of deterrence and his doctrine that ethics is purely descriptive, not prescriptive. Concerning punishment, he takes the view that since character is unalterable and that there is no sense in which a person could have behaved differently, the role of punishment is simply to present new motives to offenders in the hope that these motives, when acting upon the offender's character, will give rise to more socially acceptable behaviour in the future.³ Concerning ethics, he thinks that the unalterability of character entails that men and women cannot be made morally better, and that therefore it makes no sense to prescribe what they

¹ *FW*, p. 94(134).

² Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, pp. 127-29; Copleston, *Arthur Schopenhauer*, p. 156.

³ *WWR* 1, p. 344(428-29); *WWR* 2, p. 597(699-700).

should or should not do to improve themselves.¹ Consequently, he says of ethics that its task is just to 'indicate, explain, and trace to its ultimate ground the extremely varied behaviour of men from a moral point of view'.²

I had two points to make in reply to the objection that Schopenhauer's conceptions of praise and blame are incompatible with our standard usages of these words. The second point is that even if our usual application of praise and blame to an agent assumes that the agent could have behaved differently, this is not always the case. Many people praise God for his goodness while also holding that his nature is such that he cannot be anything other than good. If this makes sense, then Schopenhauer's doctrine that praise and blame can refer to an unalterable intelligible character also makes sense. In both cases, the application of praise or blame are instances of evaluation, and this requires only that the object of evaluation possesses attributes that can be valued either positively or negatively.³ It does not require that the object of evaluation could have behaved differently.⁴

In brief, while Schopenhauer rejects the commonly held view that praise and blame imply that an individual could have behaved differently, he provides alternative explanations that are at least worthy of consideration and have genuine plausibility. Consequently, his theory of human freedom and responsibility, upon which his explanations of praise and blame are predicated, cannot be dismissed on the grounds that it fails to give a plausible account of the latter characteristics.

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 271(343).

² *BM*, p. 130(234-35).

³ See White, *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root*, pp. 133-34, where the analogy between God and Schopenhauer's treatment of character, freedom and responsibility is treated more fully.

⁴ See Atwell, *The Human Character*, pp. 67-74 for a useful discussion of this issue.

A fourth objection to ethical aspects of Schopenhauer's theory of human freedom and responsibility is that regardless of how praise and blame are interpreted, their application is paradoxical, given that for Schopenhauer all individuals are manifestations of will, and will is something that he always speaks of in pejorative terms. Even if it is not in itself evil, it is nevertheless the source of suffering and evil in this world. Consequently, it seems paradoxical that the will, in any of its manifestations should be praised. However, given that individual characters vary in their capacity for non-egoistic behaviour and that such behaviour is valued highly by Schopenhauer, I argue that it is appropriate that those with the greatest such capacity be praised.¹

A fifth objection to ethical aspects of Schopenhauer's theory of human freedom and responsibility echoes previously made points, but is worth including because it brings out the chief merit of his explanation. The objection is that his conception of the freedom on which responsibility is grounded simply fails to correspond with what we mean by such freedom. For the will manifested in the intelligible character is free only in the negative sense that it is not determined by external antecedent conditions. It is still determined by internal necessity, because the will is what it is.² In reply, I think that Schopenhauer would claim that while the will as manifested in each intelligible character must act according to its own nature, it can still be said to possess the freedom of self-determination since it is the unique source of its actions, and is therefore responsible for them. While this reply is unlikely to satisfy those who insist that to be free means that in identical circumstances an agent could have acted otherwise, Schopenhauer, would reply that their

¹ See Appendix 2 for a detailed discussion of how saintliness is possible within Schopenhauer's metaphysics of will.

² Copleston, *Arthur Schopenhauer*, pp. 149-50.

demand is incoherent.¹ For it requires that an action occur without a sufficient ground.²

A sixth objection concerns Schopenhauer's account of deliberation³ and of pangs of conscience. Because he holds that our character is unalterable and that there are no exceptions to the law of causality, it follows that deliberation is a form of prediction and that pangs of conscience are no more than a painful recognition of what kind of person we find ourselves to be.⁴ However, these views do not accord with the intuitions of many, according to which the act of deliberating directly contributes to future behaviour rather than being a mere covert description of it, and pangs of conscience are generated by the belief that in the same circumstances we could have behaved differently. To this objection I think that Schopenhauer would reply that our intuitions are simply misguided and that the alternative explanations that he provides are more plausible. While this would not settle the issue, the presence of alternative explanations means that Schopenhauer's solution to the problem of human freedom and responsibility cannot be rejected on the grounds that its implications are simply untenable.

To a final objection, I have no reply to make on Schopenhauer's behalf. According to this objection, even if we allow that the intelligible character is distinct from the will as thing-in-itself, praise and blame ultimately fall back on the latter, since the intelligible character is an 'act of will' of the will as thing-in-itself. It follows that Schopenhauer's solution is open to the same objection that he levels at theism.⁵ Just as theism fails to demonstrate how God can

1 See John E. Atwell, 'Schopenhauer's Account of Moral Responsibility', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 61, 80 (1980), pp. 396-404 for a well-argued defence of Schopenhauer's position.

2 *FW*, pp. 19-21(57-60).

3 Gardiner, *Schopenhauer*, pp. 164-66; Copleston, *Arthur Schopenhauer*, pp. 158-59.

4 *WWR* 1, p. 297(373).

5 See *FW*, Chapter 4; *WWR* 1, pp. 406-7n(502n).

avoid being morally responsible for the actions of the beings he creates, so Schopenhauer fails to demonstrate how moral responsibility rests with the intelligible character rather than with its creator, the will as thing-in-itself. This is a serious difficulty; for it undermines his fundamental claim that in our intelligible character *we* are the *unique* source of our actions and hence are morally responsible for them. The difficulty is obscured by Schopenhauer's failure to clearly delineate the relationship between the will as thing-in-itself and the intelligible character. However, whether the intelligible character is identical with the will as thing-in-itself or is an objectification of it, the problem remains: either way, it seems that responsibility ultimately falls back upon the will as thing-in-itself. While I see no ready reply to this objection, it is nevertheless worth reiterating that Schopenhauer is not alone in having to deal with it. The difficulty of justifying the attribution of responsibility to any being other than the creator of all that exists is a perennial problem for theologians too.

CHAPTER 5

MORALITY

Schopenhauer has another reason for assuming that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will; namely that the existence of a non-phenomenal will, or in other words, a will that is thing-in-itself, is presupposed in an adequate explanation of morality. I begin by outlining his doctrine on morality, and then assess his assumption that morality requires that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will.

1

In his work *On the Basis of Morality*, Schopenhauer makes it clear that he believes that the task of ethics is to explain how acts not motivated by egoism are possible. He stresses that this task is purely descriptive and explanatory, and he explicitly rejects the view that ethics is concerned with imperatives. He asserts that imperatives only have a place in theological morality, a morality that he does not accept.¹

That acts not motivated by egoism stand in need of an explanation follows, he thinks, from the fact that egoism is the natural motivation of human action having its origin in our innermost nature.² In *The World as Will and Representation*, he elaborates on this point. He asserts that while the will that is thing-in-itself, or to use his terminology, the will as thing-in-itself, is present whole and undivided in each of us, we are only directly aware of it in our own inner self. Consequently, 'everyone wants everything for himself, wants to

¹ *BM*, p. 130(234).

² *BM*, pp. 131-32(235-36), p. 45(153).

possess, or at least control everything, and would like to destroy whatever opposes him.¹

Another source of egoism is that each individual is the 'bearer of the knowing subject, and this knowing subject is the bearer of the world'.² Consequently, others appear as mere representations, a point that Schopenhauer expresses as follows.

The whole of nature outside the knowing subject, and so all remaining individuals, exist only in his representation; that he is conscious of them always only in his representation, and so merely indirectly, and as something dependent on his own inner being and existence. With his consciousness the world also necessarily ceases to exist for him, in other words, its being and non-being become synonymous and indistinguishable.

And he concludes:

Every knowing individual is therefore in truth, and finds himself as, the whole will-to-live, or as the in-itself of the world itself, and also as the complementary condition of the world as representation, consequently as a microcosm to be valued equally with the macrocosm.³

In other words, egoism has two sources. One, the fact that while the will as thing-in-itself is present whole and undivided in each of us, we are only aware of it in our own inner self. Two, the fact that we are directly aware of others

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 332(414).

² *WWR* 1, p. 332(414).

³ *WWR* 1, p. 332(414).

only as representations, and hence as beings who depend upon our consciousness for their existence.

Schopenhauer identifies two non-egoistic motives; malice and compassion. Malice, he states, is the desire to inflict suffering on others. However, it is compassion that he is primarily interested in, for he identifies it as the motive for moral action. He asserts that compassion has two aspects, justice and loving kindness, which correspond to the two parts of what he thinks is the fundamental maxim of morality: 'Injure no one; on the contrary, help everyone as much as you can.' He further asserts that the extent to which the awareness of another's suffering stops us from injuring him, when to do so would further our own ends, is a measure of the justness of our disposition.¹ It follows, he thinks, that justice is mere restraint from injury, and from it he believes that the concepts of wrong and right are derived. Wrong is the doing of harm and right is the not doing of harm. Hence, right, like justice, is a merely negative concept.² The extent to which the awareness of another's suffering actively prompts us to help him is a measure of the goodness of our disposition,³ a quality that Schopenhauer refers to as the virtue of loving kindness. It follows, thinks Schopenhauer, that in contrast to justice, which is the mere absence of badness, loving kindness is a positive quality.

Schopenhauer emphasises that the moral worth of actions resides in their motives, not in their consequences. He acknowledges that experience cannot decide whether there are actions that are not motivated by egoism; for experience shows us only the deed, not the motive.⁴ He also acknowledges that many actions that have the appearance of being concerned for the welfare

¹ *BM*, pp. 149-50(253-54).

² *BM*, pp. 154-55(257-58).

³ *BM*, pp. 162-63(266).

⁴ *BM*, p. 138(242).

of others are in reality motivated by egoism.¹ However, he appeals to the experience of each of us to support his view that sometimes actions of genuine moral worth do occur, and to those who insist that they do not he has nothing more to say.²

Acts of compassion, Schopenhauer contends, occur when we feel the sufferings of others as our own, and in this way identify with them.

I suffer directly with him, I feel his woe just as I ordinarily feel only my own; and, likewise, I directly desire his weal in the same way I otherwise desire only my own. But this requires that I am in some way identified with him, in other words, that this entire difference between me and everyone else, which is the basis of my egoism, is eliminated, to a certain extent at least. Now since I do not exist inside the other man's skin, then only by means of the knowledge I have of him, that is, of the representation of him in my head, can I identify myself with him to such an extent that my deed declares that difference abolished.³

In speaking of feeling the woe of another as we ordinarily feel our own, Schopenhauer does not mean that we take it to be our own. If this were so, compassion for others would ultimately be motivated by egoism. Instead, he stresses that 'it is precisely in his own person, not in ours, that we feel the suffering, to our grief and sorrow.'⁴

The reason why it is only the *suffering* of another that we feel lies in the fact that, according to Schopenhauer, it is only pain and suffering that are positive

¹ *BM*, p. 126(230).

² *BM*, p. 138-39(242-43).

³ *BM*, pp. 143-44(247-48).

⁴ *BM*, p. 147(251).

and directly felt and experienced. Happiness and pleasure, by contrast, are the mere absence of privation and suffering. Consequently, the happiness of another is not felt by us in the same way as his or her suffering.¹ Essential presuppositions of this explanation are that pain and suffering are evils, and that we therefore naturally try to minimise them. While Schopenhauer does not explicitly state these presuppositions, he tacitly assumes them in passages such as the following, which is a continuation of the one quoted above.

However, the process here analysed [that is the process whereby an individual feels another's woe in the same way as he ordinarily feels his own] is not one that is imagined or invented; on the contrary, it is perfectly real and indeed by no means infrequent. It is the everyday phenomenon of compassion, of the immediate participation, independent of all ulterior considerations, primarily in the suffering of another, *and thus in the prevention or elimination of it; for all satisfaction and all well-being and happiness consist in this.*²

In other words, he holds that compassion is motivated by the desire to eliminate the suffering of another and it presupposes that suffering is recognised as an evil.

So far then Schopenhauer has done the following: he has identified egoism as the natural human motivation and given an account of its origin; he has identified two non-egoistic motives, malice and compassion, and has analysed compassion in terms of justice and loving kindness; he has employed the concept of justice to explain the concepts of right and wrong; he has given an account of what happens at the phenomenal level when acts of compassion occur.

¹ *BM*, p. 146(250).

² *BM*, p. 144(248) (italics mine).

While Schopenhauer maintains that compassion occurs when we feel the sufferings of others as our own and in this way identify with them, he acknowledges that what gives rise to compassion is a mystery. 'This event is certainly astonishing, indeed mysterious. In fact it is the great mystery of ethics.'¹ Nevertheless, he attempts an explanation. He begins by dismissing the attempt by other philosophers to make the concepts of *good* and *bad* the foundations of ethics. Such philosophers, he alleges, treat these concepts as irreducible and known a priori. And he goes on to assert that their talk of an 'Idea of the Good' is merely a cloak to hide the poverty and inadequacy of their ethics. In putting forward his own views, he argues that the concepts of good and bad, rather than being irreducible, express a relation, and rather than being known a priori, are drawn from the commonest daily experience. He defines *good* as 'all that is in conformity with the efforts and aspirations of any individual will', and *bad* as its opposite.²

Schopenhauer introduces his own explicitly metaphysical explanation of compassion, and thereby attempts to provide a metaphysical basis for morality. He thinks that corresponding to the Kantian distinction between phenomenon and thing-in-itself there are two kinds of knowledge. The first is perceptual knowledge, from which abstract knowledge is derived. It is knowledge of the world as it appears under the *principium individuationis* of space and time. The second kind of knowledge is of the metaphysical essence of all beings, the thing-in-itself, which he identifies as will.³ He holds that acts of compassion

¹ *BM*, p. 144(248).

² *BM*, p. 204(305-6). See also *WWR* 1, p. 362(450).

³ *BM*, pp. 206-11(308-12). On pages 205-7(307-8), Schopenhauer contrasts the plurality of the phenomenal world with the absence of plurality in the will as thing-in-itself. On pages 207-9(308-10), he presents a brief history of those who have recognised that plurality is only apparent and does not belong to 'the same truly existing essence, present and identical in all of them.' On page 210(311), he expresses the two opposing viewpoints. The first is of the world known as phenomenon, and the second is of the world known in its 'true inner being'. On page 211(312), he states that our delight in witnessing a noble deed springs from the certainty 'that beyond all plurality and diversity of individuals presented to us by the principium individuationis, there is to be found their unity, which truly exists, in fact which

occur when we have knowledge of the second sort. When we recognise that in our essential nature we are identical with others, we feel their sufferings and act compassionately.¹ He maintains that this knowledge is immediate, in contrast to abstract knowledge, which reaches its conclusions only after the slow process of drawing inferences.² His explanation of moral action is thus explicitly metaphysical. He assumes, following Kant, that there is a thing-in-itself, which he then identifies as will, and he holds that we are capable of being unreflectively aware that the will is the essential substratum of all beings.

In both *On the Basis of Morality* and *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer shows how he thinks that this metaphysical explanation of morality sheds light on such moral concepts as good and bad character, eternal justice, good and bad conscience, self-sacrifice and salvation. To the extent that individuals operate with one or other of the above-mentioned modes of knowledge, he thinks they are egocentric or compassionate. This distinction

is accessible to us, for there it showed itself as an actual fact.' Although none of the above comments expressly states that the second kind of knowledge is of the undifferentiated will as thing-in-itself, I think that it is clear from Schopenhauer's initial reference to the will as thing-in-itself and the subsequent expression of his thoughts that this is what he means. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that the following comment on pages 205-6(307) is difficult to reconcile with this conclusion. Schopenhauer says that 'our innermost essence-in-itself, that which wills and knows, is not accessible to us. . . . Thus there remains at least a possibility that it may be one and identical in all.' This comment seems to contradict his claim (noted above) that we know with certainty that the underlying essence of all phenomena is a unity. It also appears to contradict his oft-repeated claim that the will, the 'essence-in-itself' is *without knowledge*. I can only conclude that in this passage Schopenhauer is either confused, or attempting to withdraw from his claim to have knowledge of the thing-in-itself, or perhaps both.

Another passage that appears to contradict Schopenhauer's claim that we know with certainty that the underlying essence of all phenomena is a unity occurs on page 203(305) where he says: 'therefore, we are now to leave the firm ground of experience, which has up to now supported all our steps, in order to look for final theoretical satisfaction *in a realm that cannot possibly be reached by any experience*.'

Perhaps these passages are best interpreted as further evidence of Schopenhauer's uncertainty regarding the possibility of immediate awareness of the will as thing-in-itself; an uncertainty that I discussed in Chapter 2.

See also *WWR* 1, p. 285(359), pp. 327-28(409); *PP* 2, pp. 221-22(241-42) for passages supporting Schopenhauer's claim that there is a kind of knowledge that sees through the individuation of the phenomenal world to the unity of being in the thing-in-itself, which is will.

¹ *BM*, pp. 210-12(311-13).

² *BM*, p. 210(311). See also *WWR* 1, p. 370(459).

shows itself not only in individual acts but in dispositions of character. The good character, contends Schopenhauer, in at least partly seeing through the *principium individuationis* of the phenomenal world to the essential unity of all beings, draws less of a distinction between himself and others than is usual. He feels that others are immediately akin to him and takes an immediate interest in their weal and woe. By contrast, the bad character sees the distinction between himself and others as absolute. He feels suspicious and envious of them, and takes delight in their distress.¹ Schopenhauer thinks that the knowledge that gives rise to compassion also leads to mystical awareness, and for this reason he says of compassionate acts that they are practical mysticism. Furthermore, he thinks that the Hindu expression *Tat twam asi* (this art thou) also assumes this kind of knowledge.² For it emphasises the fact that in mystical awareness the 'I' is no longer distinct from the 'thou'. In thus appealing to knowledge of the unity and the common nature of all beings to explain good and bad character, Schopenhauer presupposes that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will.

Schopenhauer's explanation of eternal justice turns on the alleged fact that the will is both the source of suffering and its ultimate bearer. He asserts that 'the justification for suffering is the fact that the will affirms itself even in this phenomenon [the world]; and this affirmation is justified and balanced by the fact that the will bears the suffering.'³ Implicit in this passage is the assumption that the will is non-phenomenal; which for Schopenhauer means that it is thing-in-itself. In another passage he says: 'Here the punishment must be so linked with the offence that the two are one.'⁴ The reason, he thinks, why the will is the source of suffering is that its constant striving is

¹ *BM*, p. 211(312). See also *WWR* 1, p. 372(461).

² *BM*, pp. 210-12(311-13).

³ *WWR* 1, p. 331(413).

⁴ *WWR* 1, p. 351(437).

manifested in space and time, and is thereby individuated: each individual feels the vehement pressure of the will, which is his original and inner nature, and acts to satisfy its demands. But since the will can never be satisfied, suffering is inevitable. Moreover, in trying to escape his misery, the individual often causes another's suffering, thereby engaging in wickedness. Hence, the evil in the world has as its ultimate source the non-phenomenal will, the will that is thing-in-itself. And the bearer of the suffering is also ultimately the will as thing-in-itself, since each suffering individual is its manifestation.¹

Schopenhauer cites the fate of human beings as evidence of the reality of eternal justice. He thinks that human beings, as a whole, are morally contemptible and that our fate is accordingly one of want, wretchedness, misery, lamentation and death. He asserts: 'In this sense we can say that the world itself is the tribunal of the world. If we could lay all the misery of the world in one pan of the scales, and all its guilt in the other, the pointer would certainly show them to be in equilibrium.'² Schopenhauer thinks that both the misery and the wickedness of the world have as their ultimate source the non-phenomenal will, the will that is thing-in-itself.

Schopenhauer says of the concept of good conscience that it arises in the benevolent person from the direct recognition that his own inner being exists also in others. His heart is enlarged and he naturally acts with kindness and love towards the other person.³ Bad conscience, by contrast, arises in the tormentor from the obscure feeling that he is both the tormentor and the tormented. In other words, he dimly see that he is the whole will, and that the suffering that he has inflicted on another he has inflicted on himself.⁴ Hence,

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 352(438).

² *WWR* 1, p. 352(438).

³ *WWR* 1, pp. 373-74(463).

⁴ *WWR* 1, p. 365(453).

on Schopenhauer's account, the explanation of both good and bad conscience presupposes the existence of the undifferentiated will, or will that is thing-in-itself.

Self-sacrifice is explained in the following way. Schopenhauer asserts that while a good person recognises the oneness of the inner nature of all beings and therefore treats the individuality and fate of others exactly like his own, this recognition can never provide a reason for a person's preferring another's individuality to his own. Yet there are individuals who willingly sacrifice their own life for the well-being of many others.¹ Schopenhauer holds that such individuals have characters of the greatest goodness and magnanimity, and that in them the direct knowledge of the identity of the will in all phenomena is present in the highest degree of distinctness.² In other words, self-sacrifice presupposes knowledge of the unindividuated will, or will that is thing-in-itself.

To turn now to the concept of salvation. Schopenhauer holds that when our will, which is usually determined through motives according to our character, is suppressed, our character is withdrawn from the power of motives altogether. Denial or suppression of the will brings with it an entire suppression of the character; furthermore, 'however different the characters that arrived at that suppression were before it, they nevertheless show after it a great similarity in their mode of conduct, although each *speaks* very differently according to his concepts and dogmas.'³ Schopenhauer stresses that the self-suppression of the will cannot be brought about by intention or design.

¹ WWR 1, p. 375(465). While Schopenhauer writes of an individual sacrificing his life for *many* others it seems that his point requires that the truly magnanimous character is willing to sacrifice his life even if only *one* other is to benefit. It is unclear why Schopenhauer talks of 'many' rather than 'one'.

² See WWR 2, pp. 606-7(710).

³ WWR 1, p. 403(498). See also WWR 2, p. 608(712).

Rather, it comes from the 'innermost relation between knowing and willing in man', and he likens its occurrence to that which the Church calls the 'effect of grace'.¹ It has its origin, 'not in deliberate free choice (works) but in knowledge (faith)'.² It is 'a changed form of knowledge',³ a knowledge that sees through the *principium individuationis* and recognises the same inner nature, the undifferentiated will in all beings. It leads to asceticism, the withdrawal from life and the affirmation of the will to live. Clearly, then, for Schopenhauer both self-sacrifice and salvation presuppose that there is an undifferentiated will, or will that is thing-in-itself.

To summarise: Schopenhauer characterises acts of moral worth as those that are governed by non-egoistic motives. He thinks that such acts call for an explanation, given that it is our nature is to be egoistic. He argues that the specific non-egoistic motive that governs acts of moral worth is compassion, which motivates us to avoid injuring others and to relieve their sufferings. It arises when we identify with others and so feel their sufferings in the way that we feel our own. Schopenhauer explains the possibility of such an identification by appealing to the Kantian distinction between the thing-in-itself and phenomena. While in the phenomenal aspect of our existence the distinction between ourselves and others is absolute, in our essential being, an undifferentiated will that Schopenhauer identifies with Kant's thing-in-itself, we are one with all beings. Corresponding to these two aspects of our being there are two kinds of knowledge. The first is perceptual knowledge of the phenomenal world, the second is the quasi-mystical knowledge of the undifferentiated will, or will that is thing-in-itself. Compassion arises from the second kind of knowledge, that is, the knowledge that in our essential nature

¹ WWR 1, p. 404(499).

² WWR 1, p. 407(502).

³ WWR 1, p. 403(498), p. 407(503).

we are one with others. The possibility of morally worthwhile actions is thus explained by reference to our knowledge of the will that is thing-in-itself, and therefore obviously presupposes the existence of this. Its existence is also presupposed in Schopenhauer's explanation of egoism, justice, wrong, right, kindness, good and bad character, eternal justice, good and bad conscience, self-sacrifice and salvation.

2

Having outlined the main tenets of Schopenhauer's doctrine on morality, I now turn to an assessment of his assumption that the existence of a thing-in-itself that is will is a necessary presupposition to an adequate explanation of morality. I argue that, although it may have some general appeal, this assumption is subject to a serious objection.

The reason why I claim that Schopenhauer's assumption has some general appeal is that it has a place in the moral and metaphysical doctrines of Christianity and the East. Christianity teaches that 'all men are brothers', Buddhism holds that the individual self is illusory, and the Hindu doctrine of atman-brahman asserts that Brahman is in all things and is the Self (atman) of all living beings. A further point in favour of taking seriously Schopenhauer's metaphysically-based explanation of morality is that other moral theories encounter serious objections, and none has succeeded in winning universal support.

To come now to the main objection to Schopenhauer's assumption that a will that is thing-in-itself is a necessary presupposition to an adequate explanation of morality. The objection is that even if it is possible for individuals to be aware of the inner undifferentiated essence of all beings, it is difficult to see why such an awareness should influence their behaviour as phenomenal beings. The fact that we have another aspect to our being, an

aspect that is one and the same in all beings, would only seem to be relevant to our behaviour as phenomenal beings if the following conditions held. First, if our individuality remained intact in the non-phenomenal essence of all being; second, if the suffering that we feel as phenomenal individuals were also experienced by our non-phenomenal self.

However, it seems that both of these conditions are problematic for Schopenhauer. Regarding the first, he is undecided about how far into the thing-in-itself the roots of individuality penetrate.¹ However, it seems that no matter how far they penetrate there is a problem. To the extent that there is individuation in the thing-in-itself, it seems that the sufferings of another remain exclusively *his or her own* in both the phenomenal and noumenal aspects of being.² To the extent that individuation at the noumenal level is abolished, there would seem to be no self at all, and hence no self that can suffer: there is only something that is undifferentiated. Consequently, we cannot make sense of the claim that awareness of the unity of our noumenal essence is the motive for compassion among phenomenal beings.

Regarding the second condition, there is an even more serious problem. It is that of understanding how suffering is possible at all in the noumenal essence of things.³ Schopenhauer stresses that the will, that is thing-in-itself, is an endless striving that lacks consciousness. Since the awareness of

¹ *PP* 2, p. 227(248); *WWR* 2, p. 641(751), p. 275(321-22).

² A further problem is raised by Michael Maidan, in his paper 'Max Scheler's Criticism of Schopenhauer's Account of Morality and Compassion', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 20, 3 (1989), p. 233. He asks would it be moral to prevent another from finding his way to the noumenal world by trying to mitigate his pain. For in so far as pain is conceived as a way of salvation, the attempt to mitigate it impedes his progress towards negation of the will and salvation. Perhaps Schopenhauer's answer would be that circumstances alone are not enough to guarantee the occurrence of denial of the will; a susceptible character is also necessary. Since we are never in a position to have foreknowledge of character, we can never know whether another's pain will lead to denial of the will or to an increase of suffering. In the absence of this knowledge, it is, he could argue, always moral to try to alleviate the suffering of others.

³ I owe this point to Russell B. Goodman, 'Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein on Ethics', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 17 (1979), pp. 438-39.

suffering requires consciousness, it seems that even if it were possible for there to be a noumenal self that is identical with the noumenal self of others, that self could not experience suffering, and *a fortiori* could not experience the suffering that belongs to the phenomenal being of another. So again, there seems to be no reason why the awareness of noumenal unity in all beings should give rise to acts of compassion among phenomenal beings.¹

The difficulty of understanding why awareness of the inner identity of all beings should influence the behaviour of phenomenal beings has serious ramifications for Schopenhauer's entire doctrine on morality. For not only does this difficulty undermine his explanation of compassion, it undermines his explanations of good and bad character, good and bad conscience, self-sacrifice, and salvation. For each of these is built upon the assumption that the awareness of noumenal unity influences the behaviour of phenomenal beings. I conclude that Schopenhauer's assumption that an adequate explanation of morality presupposes a will that is thing-in-itself is unsupported; *pari passu* his assumption that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will is unsupported.

3

I propose now to look at some objections that can be brought against Schopenhauer's moral doctrine which have an indirect but none the less important bearing upon his claim that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will.

¹ Commentators differ in their interpretation of the metaphysical basis of Schopenhauer's doctrine of morality. Young takes the view that 'the altruist acts in the interests of a higher, transcendental self' (Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 107. See also Julian Young, 'Is Schopenhauer an Irrationalist?', *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch* 69 (1988), p. 98), a view which others see as the advocacy of a kind of 'super-egoism' (Gardiner, *Schopenhauer*, pp. 276-77; Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer*, p. 139). Simmel takes the view that there is no self in the noumenal essence of things, but rather an 'impersonal and absolute being which exists undivided beyond the phenomenality of 'I' and 'thou' (Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, pp. 110-13), while Atwell thinks that in seeing the thing-in-itself in another, the altruist sees 'the will-to-live—which is neither *my* will-to live nor *the other's* will-to-live' (Atwell, *The Human Character*, pp. 122-23). Both Simmel and Atwell conclude that there is no sense in which the awareness of the noumenal unity of all beings can move a phenomenal being *either* to compassion *or* egoism.

I begin by considering an objection raised by John Atwell.¹ He argues that the concept of compassion, Schopenhauer's key moral concept, is inconsistent with his central thesis that the will and the body are identical. According to this thesis, 'to affirm the will . . . is equivalent to affirming the body'. For, Schopenhauer says:

The fundamental theme of all the many acts of will are directed to the satisfaction of the needs inseparable from the body's existence in health; they have their expression in it, and can be reduced to the maintenance of the individual and the propagation of the race.²

In other words, according to Schopenhauer, human beings are naturally egoistic, and their egoism is expressed in acts of will, every one of which is manifested in a bodily action. What then of compassionate acts—that is acts that are not egoistic? Atwell asserts that such acts must transcend man's natural being. But what, he asks, could Schopenhauer mean by an act that is 'beyond nature'? He contends that it can only mean an act that is not concerned with preserving the agent's body or species. But, he states:

And that means it has to be an act that does not have corresponding to it a bodily action, every one of which is egoistic. In short, an act of compassion has to be an act of will, parallel to which no bodily action occurs. Such an act cannot be an act of the natural will, hence it must be an act of the nonnatural, supersensuous (or with Kant noumenal) will. But we have heard nothing of such a will, though apparently it will be something like the will that renounces the will.³

¹ Atwell, *The Human Character*, pp. 140-42.

² *WWR* 1, p. 327(408).

³ Atwell, *The Human Character*, 142.

At the end of his book Atwell considers the wider ramifications of this difficulty, and he concludes that they are extensive. He states:

By acknowledging the nonidentity of the will and the body in the human being, that is, by allowing bodily activity diverging from the individual will and intellectual (or objectively willful) activity diverging from the body, Schopenhauer undercuts the one basis he has for advocating the metaphysical doctrine, 'The world is in reality will' . . . The sole basis for claiming that the thing-in-itself is will is the will-body identity thesis; so to abandon that thesis is to undercut the only basis for demonstrating the thing-in-itself as will.¹

In a few words, Atwell's argument is this. Schopenhauer's claim that the thing-in-itself is will has as its basis the identity of the will and the body. However, compassion, his key moral concept, presupposes the possibility of acts of will for which there is no parallel bodily action, since all bodily action is egoistic. Consequently, Schopenhauer's fundamental metaphysical claim that the thing-in-itself is will is undermined.

Is there any way of salvaging Schopenhauer's position from this potentially devastating criticism? I think that the following two points may be useful. The first point is that the strategy employed by Terri Graves Taylor to explain aesthetic experience,² and which can be used to explain the possibility of salvation, can also be employed to explain the possibility of compassion. Just as the saintly character is the natural outcome of the will's striving (as thing-in-itself) for ever higher levels of objectification, so the compassionate character

¹ Ibid., p. 215. Atwell argues for this conclusion not only on the basis of Schopenhauer's doctrine of compassion, but also on the basis of his doctrines of repentance and salvation, both of which, he argues, are also inconsistent with the will-body identity thesis.

² See Terri Graves Taylor, 'Platonic Ideas, Aesthetic Experience, and the Resolution of Schopenhauer's "Great Contradiction"', *International Studies in Philosophy* 19, 3 (1987), pp. 43-53.

is the natural outcome of the same process. The compassionate person is more clearly aware of the inner nature of all beings as will.¹

However, even if this explains how compassion or the temporary overcoming of egoism is possible, where does this solution stand in relation to the specific problem posed by Atwell? What is the relation of the will to the body when acts of compassion occur? These questions lead to my second point. While Schopenhauer asserts that 'the many acts of will are directed to the satisfaction of the needs inseparable from the body's existence in health', he allows that this is not always so. For the actions of the compassionate person are directed not to the satisfaction of the needs of his own body, but rather to that of another's.² Clearly, then, for Schopenhauer acts of will are *not always* reducible to the maintenance of the individual and the propagation of the race; for not all bodily actions are egoistic.

Atwell maintains that such acts of will can only be made sense of by appealing to 'the nonnatural, supersensuous (or with Kant noumenal) will'. But, he states 'we have heard nothing of such a will, though apparently it will be something like the will that renounces the will.'³ While I readily acknowledge that Schopenhauer's account of compassion is obscure, we can still make some sense of non-egoistic acts of will. We can extract from Schopenhauer's writings the doctrine that there are two kinds of willing; one directed to the satisfaction of the willer's body and the other directed to the satisfaction of the needs of another's body. The first is the dominant mode of

1 According to Graves Taylor, Schopenhauer ranks the will's manifestations in terms of the following criteria. First, the degree to which the will, as manifested in a particular idea, is aware of itself as will; second, the degree to which the will, as manifested in a particular idea, is able to recognise the will in other things. According to these criteria, then, the compassionate person is not an inexplicable aberration in Schopenhauer's doctrine of will, but instead the natural outcome of the will striving for ever higher levels of objectification. For a more detailed discussion, see Appendix 2.

2 *BM*, pp. 210-12(311-13).

3 Atwell, *The Human Character*, p. 142.

willing and the second occurs only to the extent that an individual is a higher grade of objectification of the will as thing-in-itself. For, it is only in the higher grades that the will is able to recognise both itself and others as will, and to respond by way of non-egoistic willing. Hence, there are two kinds of willing. Each is accompanied by bodily action, one directed to the satisfaction of the needs of the willer's body and the other directed to the satisfaction of the needs of another's body. If this account is accepted as plausible then compassion is not inconsistent with Schopenhauer's thesis that the will and the body are one and the same, and hence does not threaten his fundamental metaphysical claim that the thing-in-itself is will. Instead, it emphasises that for him there exists the possibility of escape from the dominant, egoistic mode of willing.

A second objection to Schopenhauer's moral theory is raised by Hamlyn. Hamlyn argues that Schopenhauer seems to think that in showing how we *do* those things to which we attach moral worth he also shows how it is possible that we should hold such things as *being* of moral worth. Hamlyn states:

Schopenhauer thinks that the actions to which we must attribute genuine moral worth are those of 'voluntary justice, pure philanthropy, and real magnanimity'. Is it the case that in showing how such actions are possible we shall show also how it is possible that we should attach genuine moral worth to them?¹

Hamlyn contends that it is far from clear why this should be so, and he concludes that Schopenhauer simply assumes that it is concern for others that is fundamental to morality and hence of moral worth.² In other words,

¹ Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer*, p. 134.

² *Ibid.*, p. 136.

Hamlyn holds that Schopenhauer simply assumes as an irreducible given that concern for others is of moral worth.

In his defence it could be argued that for Schopenhauer concern for others is morally praiseworthy because compassionate acts seek to alleviate pain and suffering, which are intrinsically evil. He thinks that the problem of evil is at the heart of philosophical enquiry.

It is wickedness, evil and death that qualify and intensify philosophical astonishment. Not merely that the world exists, but still more that it is such a miserable and melancholy world, is the tormenting problem of metaphysics, the problem awakening in mankind an unrest that cannot be quieted either by scepticism or criticism.¹

In the following passage he asserts that it is the presence of pain and suffering that gives to the world its moral significance.

But if we enter within, and therefore take in addition the *subjective* and the *moral* side, with its preponderance of want, suffering, and misery, of dissension, wickedness, infamy, and absurdity, we soon become aware with horror that we have before us anything but a theophany. But I have shown, and have proved especially in my work *On the Will in Nature*, that the force working and operating in nature is identical with the will in ourselves. In this way, the *moral* world-order actually enters into direct connection with the force that produces the phenomenon of the world. For the *phenomenal appearance of the will* must correspond exactly to its mode of existence. On this rests the explanation of eternal justice, which is

¹ WWR 2, p. 172(201).

given is S 63, 64 of Volume 1; and, always throughout a *moral* tendency. Consequently, the problem raised since the time of Socrates is now actually solved for the first time, and the demand of our thinking reason, that is directed to what is moral is satisfied.¹

In other words, Schopenhauer holds that it is the existence of evil that is the source of philosophical puzzlement and which gives a moral significance to life. Evil, he holds, has its origin in the nature of the world; in other words, in will. Consequently, acts of moral worth are those that seek to alleviate evil. In our dealings with others, such acts express themselves in compassion; in our dealings with ourselves, such acts lead to asceticism. Hamlyn's criticism is therefore misplaced.² For Schopenhauer does not assume that in showing how compassionate acts are possible he thereby shows how it is possible that we should attach genuine moral worth to them. Rather, he appeals to something altogether different to demonstrate the latter point: namely, our recognition of and abhorrence at the evil in the world, and our corresponding admiration for acts that are motivated by a desire to lessen that evil.

A third objection to Schopenhauer's moral theory is that it is very narrow.³ It has been argued that in making morality depend upon a felt awareness of the inner identity of all beings, Schopenhauer ignores other salient features of morality such as moral reasoning, education and normative ethics. In reply, Schopenhauer would no doubt argue that his interest is in establishing what kind of metaphysical reality is pre-supposed if the claims of morality are to be justified.⁴ Having established to his own satisfaction that they pre-suppose

¹ WWR 2, p. 591(692-93).

² So too is Copleston's criticism when he says that Schopenhauer fails to show why life has a moral significance at all (Copleston, *Arthur Schopenhauer*, pp. 142-43).

³ Gardiner, *Schopenhauer*, p. 276; Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer*, pp. 145-47; Atwell, *The Human Character*, p. 136; Michael Maidan, 'Schopenhauer on Altruism and Morality', *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch* 69 (1988), p. 266.

⁴ See Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 111.

and are based upon the fact that we share the same inner essence, the will as thing-in-itself, he would see the claims of moral reasoning, education and normative ethics as irrelevant to a discussion of morality. For they cannot influence what capacity each of us has to be aware of the inner identity of all beings. This capacity is fixed by our unalterable intelligible character which, as a distinct Idea, is a particular grade of objectification of the will as thing-in-itself.¹ However, this response is unlikely to satisfy those who do not share Schopenhauer's views on the metaphysical basis of morality. Furthermore, as I have already argued, there are serious objections to his metaphysical thesis.

A fourth objection to Schopenhauer's moral theory is that in identifying compassion as the genuine moral incentive he fails to meet the criteria that he himself sets for the foundation of morality. In Section 12 of *On the Basis of Morality* he claims that such a foundation must, among other things, be both empirically discoverable and present in all human beings.² However, Atwell argues that Schopenhauer fails to establish that compassion meets either of these criteria. For we can never be sure of the motives that lie behind human behaviour, and we can certainly never know that every human character has a trace of compassion.³ Strictly speaking Atwell is correct. Nevertheless, many would agree with Schopenhauer's contention that compassion is an important motivation for non-egoistic actions, and that most human beings exhibit some trace of it at some time in their lives. To the extent that such agreement exists, Atwell's point loses force. Indeed, in Section 15 of *On the Basis of Morality*, Schopenhauer himself seems to concede that this is all he is claiming. He states:

¹ WWR 1, p. 158(211).

² BM, p. 120-21(225-26).

³ Atwell, *The Human Character*, pp. 94-97.

Now to begin with, the empirical question to be settled would be whether actions of voluntary justice and disinterested loving-kindness, capable of rising to nobleness and magnanimity, occur in experience. Unfortunately this question cannot be decided altogether empirically, because in experience it is always only the deed that is given, whereas the motives or incentives are not apparent; hence there is always left the possibility that an unegoistic motive has influenced the doer of a just or good action . . . But I believe there will be very few who question the matter, and are not convinced from their own experience that a man often acts justly, simply and solely that no wrong or injustice may be done to another.¹

A fifth objection to Schopenhauer's moral doctrine is that while he assumes that egoism is essential to our nature and that it is therefore the natural motive for our actions, he does not establish that this is so.² He provides a mass of empirical evidence to support his case, but such evidence can at most show that human beings often behave in ways that are consistent with egoism. While Schopenhauer's metaphysics provides him with a non-empirically based reason for holding that egoism is essential to our nature, this cannot establish its truth, since his metaphysics is meant to provide an explanation for what is discovered empirically. In other words, given that the empirical evidence for egoism is inconclusive, a metaphysical explanation of our allegedly egoistic behaviour can itself be no more than tentative. In Schopenhauer's defence here it can be said that even if empirical evidence does not *establish* that egoism is essential to our nature, it nevertheless seems reasonable to hold that egoism is typical of human action.³ If this much is granted, then Schopenhauer's belief

¹ *BM*, p. 138(242-43).

² See Gardiner, *Schopenhauer*, p. 276; Janaway, *Self and World*, p. 280.

³ See Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer*, p. 142.

that non-egoistic acts stand in need of an explanation seems warranted. For they are the exception and therefore cannot be explained in the same way as are most of our actions.

A sixth objection to Schopenhauer's moral theory is that it fails to give an adequate account of such characteristics as malice,¹ revenge,² repentance,³ and acquired character.⁴ Atwell notes that according to Schopenhauer neither malice nor revenge are egoistic, which means that neither are designed to serve the interests of the body or one's species. Hence, it seems that malice and revenge must arise from 'acts of will' that have no corresponding bodily actions, since all such actions are egoistic. Such an outcome, he contends, is impossible in its own right, but also impossible according to Schopenhauer's thesis that the will and the body are identical.⁵

Concerning repentance, Atwell asserts that it too contradicts the thesis that the will and the body are identical. For it signifies a rift between (bodily) action and an act of will; it signifies that an act was done 'out of character'. Atwell argues that if such an act occurred it would mean that the motivation for the act did not depend on and reflect the agent's character; yet, 'there simply can be no motivation independent and nonreflective of the character'.⁶ He allows that the situation can be salvaged to some extent if it is admitted that sometimes we act in accord with our 'human character' rather than our 'individual character'.⁷ However, even if we admit this as a possibility the

¹ See Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer*, p. 137; Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 115; Atwell, *The Human Character*, p. 142.

² Atwell, *The Human Character*, p. 142.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-66.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 123-39.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.

notion of repentance is still problematic for Schopenhauer. Why should we repent of deeds for which as individuals we are not responsible?

Concerning acquired character, Atwell makes some telling criticisms. He states:

Although rich and provocative in detail, Schopenhauer's recognition of the acquired character is an anomaly to his general theory of the human character or will, for it presupposes that which he insistently deems impossible, namely, that a person can act contrary to his or her character, that what one does can conflict with what one wills, that bodily actions can oppose acts of will, and ultimately that one's body is not identical with (or parallel to) one's will.¹

In other words, Schopenhauer's notion of acquired character cannot be made consistent with his doctrine that our bodily acts are identical with our acts of will, the latter being grounded in our unalterable character.

Atwell's objections to Schopenhauer's account of malice, revenge, repentance and acquired character are sound, and pose a serious problem for the adequacy of his moral theory. Unlike compassion, for which a case can be made out within Schopenhauer's own metaphysics of will for showing how non-egoistic acts are both possible and consistent with his thesis that the will and the body are identical, I do not see how a similar case can be made out for the above-mentioned characteristics.

The final objection concerns Schopenhauer's doctrine of salvation. The objection here is that the elevated moral status that Schopenhauer accords to saints and ascetics is inconsistent with his view that the moral significance of

¹ Ibid., p. 134.

actions lies only in their reference to others.¹ For the saint or ascetic, in becoming fully aware of the inner identity of all beings as will, withdraws from the world and in doing so appears to become a self-saver and not a world-saver. By contrast, the morally good person, in becoming only partially aware of the inner identity of all beings as will, acts to alleviate the sufferings of others.²

There are two replies to this objection. First, Schopenhauer himself makes the point that with denial of the will there occurs a transition from 'virtue to asceticism',³ and in saying this he clearly draws a distinction between the two. Consequently, it is a mistake to believe that he places the ascetic on a higher moral plane than the morally good person. Rather, with denial of the will, questions of morality simply lapse.⁴ The second point is that to see denial of the will as the selfish act of an individual who wishes to alleviate his or her own suffering is problematic. For, while Schopenhauer admits to being unsure on this point, it seems that denial of the will may also be denial of the individuality upon which selfishness depends.⁵

I conclude that while Schopenhauer's doctrine on morality can be defended against some of the objections that have been brought against it, the obscurity of his account of compassion, the narrowness of his doctrine and its inability to deal with such features as malice, revenge, repentance and acquired character, together undermine the general adequacy of his doctrine.

¹ See *BM*, p. 142(246).

² See David E. Cartwright, 'Schopenhauer as Moral Philosopher—Towards the Actuality of his Ethics', *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch* 70 (1989), pp. 61-64.

³ *WWR* 1, p. 380(470).

⁴ In fairness to Cartwright, however, I should add that in his 'Schopenhauer's Axiological Analysis of Character', *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 42 (1988), p. 36n, he asserts that Schopenhauer is ambivalent about whether his theory of salvation is a part of his ethical theory. Cartwright argues that 'what needs to be done is to argue for the "best" way of understanding his [Schopenhauer's] pessimistic humanism and not to ignore his inconsistencies.'

⁵ See *WWR* 2, p. 641(751), p. 275(321-22); *PP* 2, p. 227(248).

CHAPTER 6

FURTHER ARGUMENTS

I have looked at two principal reasons that Schopenhauer has for holding that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will. I now consider further reasons—six in all. The discussion of these is briefer than for those concerning his doctrines on human freedom and responsibility and on morality, and this is in keeping with the amount of argument that Schopenhauer himself devotes to defending them. They include reasons based upon his views concerning self-conscious awareness, solipsism, teleology in nature, the source of the particular features of phenomena, perception, and the significance of phenomena.

1

Self-consciousness

The first reason that Schopenhauer has for holding that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will is that self-conscious awareness reveals a non-phenomenal will. He writes:

In consciousness everyone recognises himself at once as the will, in other words, as that which, as thing-in-itself, has not the principle of sufficient reason for its form, and itself depends on nothing, but rather everything else depends on it.¹

In the above passage Schopenhauer's reasoning appears to be as follows.

In self-conscious-awareness we are aware of the will.

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 504(615).

We are aware of it as something that does not come under the forms of the principle of sufficient reason, and are therefore aware of it as being something non-temporal and non-spatial.

Being non-temporal and non-spatial, the will of which we are aware is the thing-in-itself.

If we ask why a thing that is non-temporal and non-spatial must be the thing-in-itself I think that Schopenhauer would simply appeal to the metaphysical world-view that he inherited from Kant. He would say that in the *Aesthetic* Kant established the distinction between phenomenon and the thing-in-itself beyond all doubt.¹ In his own works, it is clear that he fully endorsed this distinction, claiming that the world has two sides, phenomena or representation, and thing-in-itself,² and in the light of this background belief, he concluded that anything that is not phenomenon is thing-in-itself.

However, as well as arguing from the existence of the non-phenomenal will to its identity with the thing-in-itself, Schopenhauer also argued from the existence of the thing-in-itself to its identity with the will.

Thing-in-itself expresses that which exists independently of perception through any of our senses, and so that which really and truly is. For Democritus it was formed matter; at bottom, it was still the same for Locke; for Kant it was an x; for me it is will.³

This thing-in-itself, this substratum of all phenomena, and therefore of the whole of nature, is nothing but what we know directly and intimately and find within ourselves as the will.⁴

¹ *WWR* 1, pp. 417-18(514).

² *WWR* 1, pp. 30-31(61).

³ *PP* 2, p. 90(102).

⁴ *WN*, p. 216(202).

Nevertheless, while taking over Kant's metaphysical world-view, Schopenhauer rejects the way in which Kant argued for the existence of the thing-in-itself. He states:

I have not introduced the thing-in-itself surreptitiously or inferred it according to laws that exclude it, since they already belong to its phenomenon; moreover, in general I have not arrived at it by round-about ways. On the contrary, I have demonstrated it directly, where it immediately lies, namely in the will that reveals itself to everyone immediately as the in-itself of his own phenomenon.¹

In other words, he stresses that our knowledge of the thing-in-itself is based upon direct experience of the non-phenomenal will rather than upon inference.

In assessing Schopenhauer's belief that self-conscious awareness of the non-phenomenal will is a reason for holding that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will I have three points to make. The first point is that not everyone may agree that introspection yields awareness of the non-phenomenal will. To the extent that universal agreement is lacking, Schopenhauer's claim is weakened.²

The second point is that Schopenhauer simply assumes that anything that is non-phenomenal is thing-in-itself. However, unless this is an analytic truth, it appears to be an unjustified assumption. While it may have been analytic for Kant, it seems that it is not for Schopenhauer. For the intelligible characters are non-phenomenal, yet Schopenhauer distinguishes them from the thing-in-

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 503(614).

² See Snow and Snow, 'Was Schopenhauer an Idealist?' p. 653 who also mention this difficulty and note that it is raised by Rudolf Malter in 'Schopenhauers Transzendentalismus', *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch* 66 (1985), p. 36.

itself.¹ To this point he would no doubt reply that it is because the intelligible characters are many in number that they are not to be identified with the unindividuated thing-in-itself. By contrast, the non-phenomenal will is unindividuated, and hence is identical with the thing-in-itself. Nevertheless, a problem remains. Whereas Kant was prepared to countenance multiple things-in-themselves, Schopenhauer holds that there is only one. He reasons that because space and time are the principles of individuation and belong to the phenomenal world alone, the thing-in-itself must be beyond plurality and hence beyond individuation.² However, given that he allows that the intelligible characters are non-phenomenal yet many in number, it seems that the mere absence of space and time is insufficient to guarantee the absence of multiplicity. And in that case, we cannot say whether the non-spatial, non-temporal will of which we are aware in self-consciousness is or is not identical with the unindividuated thing-in-itself.³

The third point is that in claiming that self-consciousness reveals a non-phenomenal will Schopenhauer departs from his usual doctrine that knowledge requires knower and known to be inseparable or, as he sometimes puts it, that 'there is no object without a subject'⁴. According to that doctrine, we can never know what things are like in themselves, but only as they appear to us

¹ Schopenhauer is ambiguous in what he says about the relationship that exists between the thing-in-itself and the intelligible characters (See Chapter 4).

A further point to note in this context is that the Platonic Ideas are also many in number, yet do not exist in space and time. However, unlike the intelligible characters, Schopenhauer says of them that they are representation, since they conform to the most universal form of all phenomena; that of being-object-for-a-subject (*WWR* 1, p. 175(227)). Nevertheless, the point remains that whatever the ontological status of the Ideas, they, like the intelligible characters, are not individuated by space and time, yet Schopenhauer says of them that they are distinct from the thing-in-itself. Consequently, contrary to his stated doctrine, it cannot be the mere absence of spatial and temporal characteristics that identifies something as being the thing-in-itself.

² *WWR* 1, p. 128(175).

³ This point is missed by G. Steven Neeley, 'A Re-examination of Schopenhauer's Analysis of Bodily Agency: The Ego as Microcosm', *Idealistic Studies* 22 (1992), p. 63 in his rejection of Hamlyn's charge that Schopenhauer needs to show 'at least the additional premise that anything that is not a representation is a thing-in-itself' (Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer*, p. 93).

⁴ *WWR* 1, p. 14(41).

through the veil of our cognitive apparatus. In the next chapter I shall argue that even though Schopenhauer himself is inconsistent in claiming that self-consciousness can reveal the non-phenomenal will, or will that is thing-in-itself, a case can be made out for the plausibility of such awareness.

I conclude that Schopenhauer's claim that self-conscious awareness reveals a non-phenomenal will provides only weak support for his belief that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will. For, universal agreement for the claim may be lacking, and even if it is not, the awareness of a non-phenomenal will is insufficient to guarantee that the will is the unindividuated thing-in-itself. Furthermore, even if the thing-in-itself is unindividuated, it seems that the mere fact that it is not in space and time is not, as Schopenhauer assumes, sufficient to guarantee this, since both the Platonic Ideas and intelligible characters are not in space or time yet are many in number. Also, while direct awareness of non-phenomenal reality may in principle be possible, its possibility is inconsistent with Schopenhauer's doctrine that the knower and the known are inseparable, and this inconsistency undermines his claim to know that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will.

2

Solipsism

The second reason that Schopenhauer has for holding that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will is that he thinks it provides an explanation for our experience of inhabiting a shared world. He dismisses solipsism, the doctrine that I am the sole existent, as absurd. While he admits that it can never be refuted by proofs, he nevertheless offers an explanation of our conviction that we live in a shared rather than a solipsistic world, and central to this explanation is the existence of the will that is thing-in-itself. He argues as follows:

Theoretical egoism, of course, can never be refuted by proofs, yet in philosophy it has never been positively used otherwise than as a sceptical sophism, i.e., for the sake of appearance. As a serious conviction, on the other hand, it could be found only in a madhouse; as such it would then need not so much a refutation as a cure.¹

While this may appear to be a rather cavalier dismissal of solipsism, Schopenhauer does not rest his case against it simply on the grounds that it is highly counter-intuitive. He thinks that his doctrine of will provides a way of making sense of our intuitions that we live in shared world where others possess the same ontological status as ourselves. He begins by asserting that we know ourselves in two ways: through perception, we know ourselves as representation, but in immediate self-consciousness we know ourselves from the inside as will. He then reasons by analogy that just as we know ourselves to be both representation and will, so others, whom we know only as representations, are also will in their inner nature. By extending the analogy still further, he concludes that the inner nature of all phenomena is will.

The double knowledge which we have of the nature and action of our own body, and which is given in two completely different ways, has now been clearly brought out. Accordingly, we shall use it further as a key to the inner being of every phenomenon in nature. We shall judge all objects which are not our own body, and therefore are given to our consciousness not in a double way, but only as representations, according to the analogy of this body. We shall therefore assume that as, on the one hand, they are representation, just like our body, and are in this respect homogeneous with it, so on the other hand, if we set aside their existence as the subject's representation, what still

¹ WWR 1, p. 104(148).

remains over must be, according to its inner nature, the same as what in ourselves we call will. For what other kind of existence or reality could we attribute to the rest of the material world?¹

However, even if we grant that all phenomena are both representation and will, this does not establish the falsity of solipsism unless we already know that the will is non-phenomenal or in other words, that it is capable of independent existence. To establish this, Schopenhauer relies upon his claim that introspective awareness reveals a non-phenomenal will. However, even if this claim is plausible, it does not establish that the non-phenomenal will is the thing-in-itself.² Consequently, his belief that the argument against solipsism presupposes the existence of the will that is thing-in-itself, and hence presupposes that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will is only weakly supported.³

¹ WWR 1, p. 105(148-49).

² See the argument in Section 1.

³ Several commentators, including Janaway, *Self and World*, p. 149, Jerry S. Clegg, 'Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein on Lonely Languages and Criterialess Claims', in *Schopenhauer*, ed. Eric von der Luft, Studies in German Thought and History, vol. 10 (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), p. 82, and Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer*, p. 64, claim that Schopenhauer's epistemology does not lead to solipsism. Janaway argues that since Schopenhauer's account of the subject of knowing is essentially the same as the Kantian account of the subject as 'the synthetic unity of apperception', this subject cannot be identified with any individual in the world, and therefore cannot be the self that is implied in solipsism. There are two difficulties in accepting this claim. First, it runs counter to Schopenhauer's admission that solipsism is a *prima facie* difficulty for his epistemology, and to his subsequent attempt to show why solipsism is not true. Second, it focuses on the self considered as 'the pure subject of knowing', which, because it is not part of the phenomenal world, is neither one nor many (WWR 1, p. 5(32), WWR 2, p. 15(23-24)). While this account of the self does not lead to solipsism, Schopenhauer's other conception of the self, that is, of the embodied self, does lead to solipsism. For according to that account of the self, I am my brain, and the world of representation is the product of my brain (WWR 2, p. 273(319-20), WWR 2, p. 191(224), WWR 2, p. 278(325), WWR 2, p. 20(29), WWR 2, p. 24(33-34). See also Maurice Mandelbaum, 'The Physiological Orientation of Schopenhauer's Epistemology', in *Schopenhauer: His Philosophical Achievement*, ed. Fox, pp. 55-56; White, *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root*, pp. 43-49). While, as Janaway points out, Schopenhauer employs both conceptions of the self, I think that it is the embodied self that is most characteristic and central to his epistemology. For, it is the embodied self that is a manifestation of will, and which is driven by the will in all of its activities including that of representing the world. Consequently, I think that the problem of solipsism is a genuine one in Schopenhauer's philosophy.

Particular Features of Phenomena

The third reason that Schopenhauer has for holding that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will is one that he takes over from Kant. He thinks that the particular features of the world of phenomena can only be explained on the assumption that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will. He holds that while the general features of phenomena such as their spatial, temporal, and causal properties are structures that have their origin in our mental faculties, their particular features have their origin in the thing-in-itself that is will. The following passage from the 1847 edition of *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason* is suggestive of this doctrine. Schopenhauer asserts that Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism leads to the conviction that:

The world is just as dependent on us, as a whole, as we are on it in particular.¹

His subsequent comments imply that in saying 'the world is just as dependent on us, as a whole' he means that the formal features of phenomenal objects and their possibility are mind-dependent. While he does not indicate what he means by the phrase 'as we are on it in particular', it seems plausible to interpret him as meaning that the world, considered in its non-phenomenal aspect, is responsible for the non-formal properties of the phenomenal world.

But what constitutes the non-formal properties of phenomena? While Schopenhauer never makes this explicit, in the following passage he states that the will, which he elsewhere identifies as the thing-in-itself, is responsible for that part of our knowledge that is a posteriori.

¹ *FFR*, p. 29(35).

All that is known to us of things in a merely empirical or *a posteriori* way, is in itself *will*; whereas, so far as they can be determined *a priori*, things belong exclusively to *representation*, to mere phenomenon.¹

This suggests that among the non-formal properties of phenomena, Schopenhauer includes their secondary qualities, since we acquire knowledge of the latter *a posteriori*. However, this suggestion needs to be carefully scrutinised given the following passage in which he insists that *both* the primary and secondary qualities are in our minds rather than in the thing-in-itself.

Locke had shown that the secondary qualities of things, such as sound, odour, colour, hardness, softness, smoothness, and the like, founded on the affections of the senses, do not belong to the objective body, the thing-in-itself. To this, on the contrary, he attributed only the primary qualities, i.e., those that presuppose merely space and impenetrability, and so extension, shape, solidity, number, mobility. But this Lockean distinction, which was easy to find, and keeps only to the surface of things, was, so to speak, merely a youthful prelude to the Kantian. Thus, starting from an incomparably higher standpoint, Kant explains all that Locke had admitted as *qualitates primariae*, that is, as qualities of the thing-in-itself, as also belonging merely to its phenomenon in our faculty of perception or apprehension, and this just because the conditions of this faculty, namely space, time and causality, are known by us *a priori*. Thus Locke had abstracted from the thing-in-itself the share that the sense-organs have in its phenomenon; but Kant further abstracted the share

¹ WN, p. 311(281). See also WWR 2, p. 182(213).

of the brain functions (although not under that name). In this way the distinction between the phenomenon and the thing-in-itself obtained an infinitely greater significance, and a very much deeper meaning. For this purpose he had to take in hand the great separation of our *a priori* from our *a posteriori* knowledge, which before him had never been made with proper precision and completeness or with clear and conscious knowledge.¹

Perhaps the best way to interpret this passage is as follows. Schopenhauer agrees with Kant that both the secondary and the primary qualities of objects are in the mind alone. But this does not mean that both are produced by the mind. Rather, the non-formal properties, which include the secondary qualities of objects, are produced by the will that is thing-in-itself, and are therefore known *a posteriori*, while the formal properties, which include the primary qualities, are produced by the mind, and are therefore known *a priori*. This interpretation is supported by the following passages.

As the will is the thing-in-itself, *the inner content*, the essence of the world, but life, the visible world, the phenomenon, is only the mirror of the will, this world will accompany the will as inseparably as a body is accompanied by its shadow; and if will exists, then life, the world, will exist.²

That the will as such is free, follows already from the fact that, according to our view, it is the thing-in-itself, *the content of all phenomena*.³

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 418(514-15). See also *Prol.*, pp. 42-44.

² *WWR* 1, p. 275(347) (italics mine).

³ *WWR* 1, p. 286(361) (italics mine). See also *WWR* 1, p. 474(580-81).

While it is not entirely clear what Schopenhauer means when he states that the will as thing-in-itself is 'the content' of all phenomena, he could well be suggesting that the will that is thing-in-itself is ultimately responsible for the existence, manner, spatial location and temporal ordering of our representations. In other words, the will that is thing-in-itself accounts for the fact that some objects rather than others exist, that such objects possess their characteristic shapes, sizes, colours and tastes, and that they appear in a particular location and temporal order. On this interpretation we can make sense of Schopenhauer's suggestion that we are dependent on the will that is thing-in-itself for the *particular* features of the phenomenal world, while allowing that both the primary and secondary qualities exist in the mind. Indeed, the following passage from his *Manuscript Remains* provides solid support for this interpretation.

The phenomenon contains two elements, one part that is *a priori* and the other that is knowable only *a posteriori*; it therefore consists of form and of thing-in-itself. But *since* the form everywhere envelops the thing-in-itself, then of the latter nothing more can be known for certain than its mere existence. The forms belong indiscriminately to all things (or phenomena); but as such things nevertheless have differences, then what determines these differences is the thing-in-itself. Consequently it is actually *given* to us, but always enveloped in the form.¹

In brief, Schopenhauer holds that while the formal features of phenomena have their origin in our mental faculties and are known a priori, the particular or non-formal features of phenomena are known a posteriori and have their origin in the will that is thing-in-itself. Further, he maintains that while the

¹ MSR 3, p. 712(656).

primary qualities are known a priori and the secondary qualities are known a posteriori, both exist in the mind alone. I interpret him to mean that while both exist in the mind alone, the primary qualities, which are included amongst the formal properties, are produced by the mind, whereas the secondary qualities, which are included amongst the non-formal properties, are produced by the will that is thing-in-itself. He also asserts that the content of all phenomena is the will as thing-in-itself, thereby suggesting that he equates the particular or non-formal features of phenomena with their content. While it is not altogether clear what he means by the content of phenomena, he may plausibly be interpreted as holding that the will that is thing-in-itself determines such things as the kinds of objects that exist, together with their characteristic shapes, sizes, colours and tastes, as well as their particular location and temporal order.¹

If this interpretation is correct, what are we to make of it? First, it may be difficult to see how the will that is thing-in-itself can be responsible for the particular facets of the primary and secondary qualities of phenomena without having such qualities itself. For example, we might ask how something that is non-spatial and non-temporal can be responsible for the particular spatial qualities and temporal orderings of its manifestations. Or how something that is undifferentiated can be the direct source of differentiation. However, implicit in this objection is the assumption that effects must resemble their causes, and while Descartes, among others, adopts this assumption in his argument for the existence of God,² its truth is far from obvious. Consider the following example: a patient's brain is stimulated by a metal probe, causing the patient to have the sensation of colour. This is surely a case of cause and

¹ See Snow and Snow, 'Was Schopenhauer and Idealist?', pp. 640-41 for an interesting discussion of the historical context of Schopenhauer attempt to understanding the contribution that the thing-in-itself makes to representation.

² Descartes, *Discourse on Method and The Meditations*, 'Third Meditation', p. 119.

the effect being qualitatively different. While physicalists attempt to re-describe such qualia in terms of tangible physical properties, their reductionist approach is controversial. A further point is that both the theistic explanation of the nature and fact of the existence of the universe, and the scientific hypothesis that space and time have their origin in a singularity assume that effects need not resemble their causes. Thus the first objection is not a strong one.

The second objection is more fundamental. It calls into question the assumption made by both Kant and Schopenhauer that the particular features of phenomena have to be explained by the thing-in-itself. Could they not, as suggested by Hume, have their explanation in 'the energy of the mind itself, or from the suggestion of some invisible and unknown spirit, or from some other cause still more unknown to us?'¹ To this objection I think that Schopenhauer would simply reply that the thing-in-itself that is will is the best explanation for our experience of the particular properties of phenomena. However, while there is some plausibility to this claim, it is weakened by its lack of detailed explanation.

4

Perception

The fourth reason that Schopenhauer has for holding that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will is that he thinks the possibility of perception presupposes its existence. F. C. White in his recent book *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*,² asserts that Schopenhauer presents us with two theories of perception, one psychological

¹ David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding*, Section xii, Part 1, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 153.

² See White, *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root*, pp. 45-53.

and the other physiological, arguing that while the former is beset with difficulties, the latter is not without plausibility; and examining this thesis physiological thesis he stresses that he is assessing the plausibility of the thesis itself rather than the way in which Schopenhauer himself argues for it. Indeed he sees serious weaknesses in Schopenhauer's own arguments.

White presents Schopenhauer's physiological thesis in the following way. In perception we are not aware of reality as it exists independently of our perceivings, but are aware of a set of phenomena created by our brains when sensations are presented to them. This process of creation is a physiological one: it starts when sense-receptors of our body are stimulated. The ensuing changes in our sense organs are translated into electrical impulses which travel along the neural pathways of the central nervous system to the brain; and the brain, using the encoded information creates the inner representations that constitute our perceptual consciousness. Consequently, if we accept the thesis that the only given in perception is sensation, it follows that we are only aware of a set of phenomena created by our brain, never of reality as it exists independently of it.

White considers two objections to Schopenhauer's physiological thesis. First, it must be false because it is self-refuting. It begins by assuming that sensations are the only *given*, and concludes that all physical objects are the creations of the intellect. However, this implies that the human body itself together with its sense-organs and sensations are creations of the intellect. Consequently, the conclusion appears to contradict the initial premise of the argument. To this objection White replies that Schopenhauer's argument need not be regarded as self-refuting. Rather, Schopenhauer may be seen as beginning from our commonsense belief that sense-organs and bodies exist independently of our perceiving them, and on reflection abandoning this belief on the grounds that it conflicts with what he regards as the more sustainable

belief that perception is the kind of physiological process that he has described.¹

Second, Schopenhauer's physiological thesis appears to lead to the nonsensical conclusion that brains are the constructs of other brains, or in the case of self-perception, of themselves. This is because brains are physical objects, and physical objects are the creations of the intellect, and the intellect is the brain. White's reply to this objection brings out the importance of the will as thing-in-itself in Schopenhauer's theory of perception. He contends that the final conclusion to be drawn from Schopenhauer's physiological theory is not that brains and other perceived objects are the products of brains, but that in reality as it is in itself, there are no such things as brains. Whatever reality is like in itself, nothing can be known of it through perception, and all talk of brains and their interpretations is merely talk about the world as it appears. White then makes the following important observation. He notes that Schopenhauer identifies the brain with the intellect, the supposed creative faculty of perception. Therefore, in reality as it is in itself, not only are there are no such things as brains, but also there are no such things as intellects either. Consequently, while we know that there is something to which phenomena present themselves, through our ordinary forms of knowledge we do not know what that something is. To know what we are in our inner selves, an altogether different form of knowledge is needed. The importance of this observation is that it shows that Schopenhauer's physiological theory of

1 Others argue that the charge of self-refutation can be met once it is recognised that Schopenhauer adopts both an objective and a subjective viewpoint in his description of the world. From an objective viewpoint sensations, bodies and brains are necessary conditions for perception, from a subjective viewpoint they are mind-dependent entities; there is no contradiction, just opposing points of view (See Hübscher, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer in its Intellectual Context*, pp. 381-82. See also Robert Wicks, 'Schopenhauer's Naturalization of Kant's A Priori Forms of Empirical Knowledge', *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 10 (1983), pp. 191-94). However, while this approach is instructive concerning Schopenhauer's method, it fails to bring out the radical conclusion that can be drawn from his theory of perception; that is, the conclusion that whatever reality is like in itself, nothing can be known of it through perception.

perception ultimately points to the conclusion that there exists something that is non-phenomenal, and in his metaphysical schema this is the thing-in-itself. It also nicely dovetails with his claim that an altogether different form of knowledge is available to us in introspective awareness, when what we are aware of is the non-phenomenal will or, in his words, the will as thing-in-itself.

In brief, Schopenhauer's theory of perception provides him with another reason for holding that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will. While his own way of arguing for his theory may be flawed,¹ his general thesis in its physiological form has some plausibility. I conclude that to the extent that Schopenhauer's theory of perception is accepted, his belief in a non-phenomenal something, which he identifies as the will that is thing-in-itself, is thereby supported.

5

Significance of Phenomena

The fifth reason that Schopenhauer has for holding that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will is that he thinks that unless it is presupposed, phenomena would be empty and meaningless. He writes:

Now if the objects appearing in these forms are not to be empty phantoms, but are to have meaning, they must point to something, must be the expression of something, which is not, like themselves, object, representation, something existing merely relatively, namely for a subject. On the contrary, they must point to something that exists without such dependence on something that stands over against

¹ See White, *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root*, pp. 49-53.

it as its essential condition, and on its forms; in other words, they must point to something that is not a representation, but a thing-in-itself.¹

While it is not entirely clear what meaning Schopenhauer thinks the existence of the thing-in-itself confers on representations, it may be that he is expressing a thought similar to Kant's when the latter says that 'though we cannot know these objects as things-in-themselves, we must yet be in a position at least to think them as things-in-themselves; *otherwise we should be landed in the absurd conclusion that there can be appearances without anything that appears.*'²

While these sentiments may express the not uncommon human desire for the existence of a reality that is somehow more real than the reality of empirical perception, they do not have much force as an argument for the existence of such a reality. I conclude that Schopenhauer's belief that the significance of phenomena requires that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will has only weak support.

6

Teleology

The sixth reason that Schopenhauer has for holding that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will is his belief that the existence of a will that is thing-in-itself is presupposed in an adequate explanation of teleology in nature. His views on the purposiveness of nature are expressed in the following passage.

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 119(165-66). See also *WWR* 1, pp. 98-99(141).

² *CPR*, Bxxvi, p. 27, (*italics mine*).

Everything presses and pushes towards existence, if possible towards organic existence, i.e., life, and then to the highest possible degree thereof.¹

If we ask *why* nature strives for existence and for the highest forms of life, and furthermore, why it does so at the cost of so much suffering, Schopenhauer declares:

The only answer is that the *will-to-live* thus objectifies itself. Let us fully consider it [this whole scene of horror], and comprehend it in all its objectifications, and we shall then arrive at an understanding of its true nature and of the world.²

And in another passage, he states:

Every glance at the world, to explain which is the task of the philosopher, confirms and establishes that the will-to-live, far from being an arbitrary hypostasis or even an empty expression, is the only true description of the world's innermost nature.³

In referring to the will-to-live as something that 'objectifies itself' it is clear that Schopenhauer is talking about a will-to-live that in itself is non-phenomenal; and this is the will that is thing-in-itself.⁴ In referring to the will-to-live as a true description of the world's innermost nature, it is again clear that Schopenhauer is referring to the will that is thing-in-itself.⁵ If we ask why he identifies the non-phenomenal will with the thing-in-itself, again the answer is that he is working within a Kantian metaphysical framework according to

¹ WWR 2, p. 350(410).

² WWR 2, pp. 354-56(415-16).

³ WWR 2, p. 350(410).

⁴ See the discussion of Interpretation 2 in Chapter 2.

⁵ See the discussion of Interpretation 6 in Chapter 2.

which there is only phenomena and thing-in-itself. Consequently, anything that is not phenomena is thing-in-itself.

In summary, Schopenhauer holds that purposiveness in nature is explained by and presupposes the existence of a will that is thing-in-itself. His views on teleology thereby provide him with a reason for holding that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will.

Before assessing Schopenhauer's belief that an adequate explanation of purposiveness in nature presupposes a will that is thing-in-itself, more needs to be said about the way in which he explains teleology in terms of will.

In the following two passages Schopenhauer stresses that purposiveness does not entail that there is conscious design within nature.¹

She [nature] achieves without reflection, and without conception of an end, that which appears so appropriate and so deliberate, because she does so without representation, which is entirely of secondary origin.²

In order to recognise, as something original and unconditioned, that exceedingly strong tendency of all animals and human beings to maintain life and continue it as long as possible—a tendency that was described above as the characterisation of this subjective, or of the

¹ Young argues that Schopenhauer's claim that the will acts 'without knowledge' is implausible, since the extension of will throughout nature presupposes intentional agency. He argues that Schopenhauer really wishes to make the point that the will is unaccompanied by consciousness. To this objection I think that Schopenhauer would reply that the propensity of the will to strive for existence at ever higher levels of objectification does not require knowledge on the part of the will. He would probably add that we are tempted to think that it does only because we incorrectly draw an analogy between the will's purposes and human purposes. But, says Schopenhauer: 'We are in no way justified, however, in imputing this limitation of ours to nature; for nature herself is *prius* of all intellect, and, as was stated in the previous chapter, her acting differs from ours in its whole manner' (*WWR* 2, p. 327). See Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, pp. 70-72.

² *WWR* 2, pp. 327-28(382-83).

will¹—we are still required to make it clear that this tendency is by no means the result of any objective knowledge of the value of life, but is independent of all knowledge; or, in other words, that those beings exhibit themselves not as drawn from the front, but as driven from behind.²

Schopenhauer also stresses that purposiveness in nature need not point to a designer or God existing outside of nature. Instead, it can be explained in terms its inner nature, which is will.³ And he praises Aristotle for seeing purpose that is immanent rather than external to nature.

Aristotle, who here shows his brilliant side, contrasts very advantageously with these philosophers of modern times. Without prejudice he goes to nature, knows nothing of physico-theology, such a thing never entered his head, and has never looked at the world to see whether it was something made. In his heart, he is free from all this, for he advances hypotheses on the origin of animals and human beings without running into the physico-theological train of thought. He always says *natura facit*, never *natura facta est*. However, after studying nature honestly and carefully, he finds that everywhere she goes to work appropriately, and he says: 'We see that nature does nothing in vain.'⁴

Schopenhauer holds that purposiveness in nature shows itself not only in the sheer pressing towards existence of all phenomena, but also in the harmony

¹ Payne's translation of this sentence is awkward. In the translation by R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp the passage reads more easily. It says: 'a tendency which was set forth above as characteristic of the subjective, or of the will'. The German reads '*um den oben, zur charakteristik dieses Subjektiven, oder Willens*.'

² WWR 2, p. 352(412).

³ See A. Lovejoy, 'Schopenhauer as an Evolutionist', *The Monist* 21 (1911), p. 219 for an interesting discussion of teleology in Schopenhauer's philosophy, especially with respect to the historical context of his ideas.

⁴ WWR 2, p. 340(398-99).

that nature displays. All its parts, he holds, exhibit a certain 'suitability' that has both an inner and an outer aspect. Inner suitability is the relation between the parts of an organism that make possible the maintenance of the individual and of the species of which it is a part. Outer suitability is the relation of inorganic to organic nature, or the relation of the individual parts of organic nature to one another, a suitability that renders possible the maintenance of the whole of organic nature, or of the individual species.¹ And he sees the suitability that is expressed in nature as instrumental in promoting its final cause or purpose, which is the maintenance and promotion of life in ever higher forms of existence. He states:

Accordingly, every phenomenon has had to adapt itself to the environment into which it entered, but again the environment also has to adapt itself to the phenomenon, although it occupies a much later position in time; and this *consensus naturae* we see everywhere. Therefore, every plant is well adapted to its soil and climate, every animal to its element and to the prey that is to become its food, that prey also being protected to a certain extent against its natural hunter.²

To explain how this mutual adaptation occurs, Schopenhauer invokes his doctrine of Platonic Ideas. These are eternal prototypes of the multifarious forms that exist in nature. While their ontological status is obscure, he says of them:

Not themselves entering into time and space, the medium of individuals, they remain fixed, subject to no change, always being, never having become.³

¹ WWR 1, pp. 154-55(206-7).

² WWR 1, p. 159(212).

³ WWR 1, p. 129(177). For various interpretations of the status of the Ideas in Schopenhauer's philosophy see Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, p. 239;

In inorganic nature, each of the fundamental forces is an expression of an Idea,¹ and in organic life, each species likewise expresses an Idea.² In human beings, each individual is the expression of a separate Idea, and each such Idea constitutes the individual's intelligible character.³

Schopenhauer thinks that the mutual adaptation and the interdependence of the parts of nature arise from and are a reflection of the harmonious interrelation of the Ideas. But this of course raises the question of how and why the Ideas are interrelated in this way. While admitting that these are difficult questions to answer he nevertheless makes an attempt. He maintains that the Ideas are the immediate objectification of the will, whose nature is to strive for ever higher levels of objectification.⁴ In order to achieve this objective, the Ideas must appear according to a rule, the law of causality. This is because they are referred to a common matter, in the possession of which they have to be divided. If this were not so there would be no need for a rule regulating their appearance; for they could coexist in endless space throughout endless time. To use his own words, 'Only because all those phenomena of the eternal Ideas are referred to one and the same matter must there be a rule for their appearance and disappearance, otherwise one would not make way for another.'⁵

Copleston, *Arthur Schopenhauer*, pp. 105-6; Janaway, *Self and World*, pp. 277-78; Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer*, p. 107; James D. Chansky, 'Schopenhauer and Platonic Ideas: A Groundwork for an Aesthetic Metaphysics', in *Schopenhauer*, ed. von der Luft, pp. 66-81; Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, pp. 81-82; Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, pp. 92-93.

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 155(207).

² *WWR* 1, p. 156(208-9).

³ *WWR* 1, p. 158(211).

⁴ *WWR* 1, p. 145(195).

⁵ *WWR* 1, p. 135(183).

Perhaps Schopenhauer's explanation can be paraphrased as follows. The common matter in which the phenomena of the Ideas appear is finite.¹ Given that the nature of the will is to strive to manifest itself in ever higher life forms, this objective can only be achieved if there is a rule regulating the appearance of the Ideas. Otherwise there would be no mechanism to ensure that the Ideas of the lower life forms give up their matter to those of the higher life forms and the will's nature would be frustrated.

While Schopenhauer holds that the higher Ideas subdue the lower Ideas, he also notes that the former depend upon the latter for their appearance. He states:

Although in man as (Platonic Idea) the will finds its most distinct and perfect objectification, this alone could not express its true being. In order to appear in its proper significance, the Idea of man would need to manifest itself, not alone and torn apart, but accompanied by all the grades downwards through all the forms of animals, through the plant kingdom to the inorganic. They all supplement one another for the complete objectification of the will. They are as much presupposed by the Idea of man as the blossoms of the tree presuppose its leaves, branches, trunk, and root. They form a pyramid, of which the highest point is man.²

In the following passage Schopenhauer gives another explanation for the harmonious interrelation of the Ideas.

1 If we ask why matter is finite I have no answer. Perhaps Schopenhauer might maintain that the hypothesis that matter is finite is part of the best explanation for the observed harmony in nature.

2 *WWR* 1, p. 153(205).

The whole world with all its phenomena is the objectivity of the one and indivisible will, the Idea, which is related to all the other Ideas as harmony is to the individual voices. Therefore, that unity of the will must also show itself in the agreement of all its phenomena with one another.¹

In other words, it is because the Ideas are expressions of one and the same will that they coexist in harmony.

To summarise: Schopenhauer holds that nature displays purpose, namely to maintain and promote life in ever higher forms of existence. Nature's purposiveness is also evident, he thinks, in the inner and outer suitability or harmony of its parts. He explains this harmony in terms of the Platonic Ideas whose appearance in matter is regulated according to the law of causality. He also explains it by noting that all the Ideas are expressions of one and the same will. He stresses that nature's purposiveness is immanent, arising from the inner nature of all phenomena, which is will. The will acts without knowledge, and therefore pursues its purpose without conscious design.

Having outlined how Schopenhauer attempts to explain teleology in nature in terms of will, I now turn to an assessment of his explanation. I begin with a discussion of what others have taken purposiveness to be. I then consider the plausibility of Schopenhauer's claim that nature is purposive and that this purpose is immanent. Finally, I look at the plausibility of his claim that immanent purpose is attributable to the metaphysical will or will that is thing-in-itself.

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 158(211). While this passage is useful in showing the way in which Schopenhauer thinks that the harmony of the Ideas arises, it is difficult to make sense of his assertion that the one and indivisible will is an Idea. For his usual doctrine is that the Ideas are representations whereas the will is the thing-in-itself (see *WWR* 1, pp. 174-75(227)). I can only assume that this assertion is an aberration in his exposition.

Human beings clearly have purposes, and it seems plausible to hold that human action is the paradigm of teleological or purposive behaviour.¹ But what does it mean to have a purpose? Various accounts have been proposed. Ernest Nagel asserts that central to the notion of purpose is that of a means-ends relationship.² Larry Wright builds upon this idea in suggesting that behaviour is purposive if it tends to bring about a certain goal and is brought about by the fact that it tends to bring about that goal.³ In other words, behaviour is teleological when it is brought about by its tendency to produce a certain result.⁴ In human beings, such behaviour is easily detected since many of our actions are brought about by reasons, motives and interests of which we are conscious, and which constitute our goals. If we consider non-human life, there is also good evidence for purposive or teleological behaviour. If, for example, the goal or end of organic life-forms is survival, then it is not difficult to see in animal and plant activities the tendency to bring about this goal. It is sometimes objected that in interpreting the behaviour of non-human organic life as purposive we are guilty of anthropomorphism. To this objection the reply offered by Wright is persuasive. He argues that so long as the behaviour in question is objectively detectable and that it tends to achieve the goal, then it does not matter that the description under which humans find it easiest to make these assessments happens to be anthropomorphic. That is, it does not matter that we judge a case of non-human behaviour to be purposive on the basis that 'Well, that's how I would behave if I were there.'⁵ Furthermore, Wright adds

¹ Larry Wright, 'Explanation and Teleology', *Purposive Behaviour and Teleological Explanations*, eds. Frank George & Les Johnson (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1985), p. 124. See also Larry Wright, *Teleological Explanations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 26.

² Ernest Nagel, *The Structure of Science* (London: Routledge, 1961), p. 403. See also Arthur E. Falk, 'Purpose, Feedback, and Evolution', *Purposive Behaviour and Teleological Explanation*, eds. George & Johnson, p. 291.

³ Wright, 'Explanation and Teleology', p. 130.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

that in cases where direct observation is not possible, we are nevertheless justified in saying that an organism is goal-directed if goal-directedness is the best account of its behaviour.¹

In the case of inorganic nature, the evidence of purpose is, as Schopenhauer himself admits, more controversial. He allows that it may simply be a matter of human projection.² Nevertheless, it can be argued that the persistence of certain features of inorganic life in their characteristic form can be interpreted in terms of goal-directedness or a means-ends relationship. For example, the possibility of organic life critically depends upon the fundamental forces existing in their present unchanging form. Consequently, the latter can be seen as means to promoting the former. Wright argues that 'the difference among conscious, animate and mechanical cases can be viewed as mere matters of detail so far as the form of the account is concerned. The details are very important . . . but it is the consequence-etiological form that the paradigm and the metaphorically extended cases have in common.'³

If it is granted that the essential feature of purpose is the presence of goal-directedness or a means-ends relationship, and that this feature is present throughout nature, it seems that Schopenhauer has clear justification for his assumption that purpose is present not only in human but also in non-human nature.

This brings us to his further claim that purposiveness in nature is *immanent* rather than external to it? Can we make sense of this? The following example which contrasts external and immanent purpose illustrates that we can. A theist might hold that the purpose of human life is to strive for moral excellence, and

⁵ Wright, *Teleological Explanations*, p. 51.

¹ Ibid., p. 54. See also Wright, 'Explanation and Teleology', p. 137.

² *WWR* 2, pp. 335-36.

³ Wright, *Teleological Explanations*, p. 73.

that this purpose arises from God's command. In other words, it has its origin in something external to the agent. However, an atheist too might hold that the purpose of life is to strive for moral excellence, but believe that this purpose arises from human nature itself. In other words, it is an immanent purpose. While the claim that the purpose of life is to strive for moral excellence is a controversial one, there seems no more difficulty in accepting it as an immanent purpose than accepting it as one whose origin is external to the agent. Furthermore, if it makes sense to speak of purposes in non-human nature, then there seems to be no more difficulty in accepting that these may be immanent than in accepting that human purposes may be immanent.

Wright's discussion of whether teleological behaviour has to be irreducible is also relevant here. He argues that it does not matter whether an organism's goal-directedness is at bottom irreducible or due to some other aspect of its make-up. Either way it is a consequence of the organism's essential nature, its physiology.¹ In other words, it is immanent. Wright also contends that there is a strong parallel between goals and functions, arguing that functional explanations provide consequence etiologies that are just like explanations in terms of goals.² Since some actions in inanimate nature can be described in terms of functions, it is reasonable to conclude that in appropriate cases functions too can justifiably be described as arising from the essential nature of inanimate features of the universe, and are therefore immanent. In short, Schopenhauer's claims that nature is purposive and that this purposiveness is immanent are both plausible.

On the assumption that Schopenhauer's belief that there is immanent purpose in nature is plausible, it is now a matter of no great importance

¹ Ibid., p. 68.

² Ibid., p. 80.

whether nature is described as 'will' or something else. However, what is more controversial and certainly of far greater importance is Schopenhauer's claim that teleology in nature is explained by the metaphysical will, or will that is thing-in-itself. Why does the will of which he speaks have to be noumenal rather than phenomenal?

Schopenhauer could reply that a phenomenal will would have to exist in time and would therefore be subject to change. But nature reveals a uniformity of purpose that points to unchangeability, and hence to something non-phenomenal. The following passage is suggestive of the association in his mind of unchangeability and the existence of non-phenomenal reality.

We have considered the great multiplicity and diversity of the phenomena in which the will objectifies itself; indeed, we have seen their endless and implacable struggle with one another. Yet, in pursuit of the whole of our discussion so far, the will itself, as thing-in-itself, is by no means included in that plurality, that change. . . . Just as a magic lantern shows many different pictures, but it is only one and the same flame that makes them all visible, so in all the many different phenomena which together fill the world or supplant one another as successive events, it is only the *one will* that appears, and everything is its visibility, its objectivity; it remains unmoved in the midst of this change.¹

However, it is difficult to agree with Schopenhauer's suggestion that unchangeability points to the existence of a non-phenomenal reality. For according to the arguments in Kant's *Aesthetic*, arguments that Schopenhauer wholeheartedly embraces, space and time are features of the phenomenal

¹ WWR 1, p. 153(204-5).

world, yet their characteristics never change. Isn't it possible that the will too might be a changeless feature of phenomenal reality? It seems that his own metaphysics undermines his appeal to unchangeability as evidence for a non-phenomenal reality.

Another reply that Schopenhauer could make would be one referring back to his explanation of harmony in nature. On this point his assertion is that nature is harmonious because the Ideas coexist in harmony, and that the Ideas are harmonious because they are expressions of one and the same will. In other words, he holds that the harmony that exists in nature presupposes a unitary will as its source. By a unitary will he means a will that is 'non-plural' rather than 'one' will. Since he holds that space and time are the conditions of plurality and forms of the phenomenal world alone, it follows that a 'non-plural' will is a non-phenomenal will.¹

However, it is difficult to see why mere absence of plurality in the will should give rise to harmony among the Ideas, since surely the absence of something cannot produce anything.

I conclude that neither Schopenhauer's appeal to unchangeability nor his appeal to the harmony of the Ideas is adequate to establish that the will responsible for immanent purpose in nature must be non-phenomenal or, to use his terminology, the will as thing-in-itself.

Leaving aside Schopenhauer's own arguments for the metaphysical will or will that is thing-in-itself, I now wish to consider the following way of arguing for its existence. It might be asserted that all features of organisms that Schopenhauer speaks of as providing evidence of purpose in nature can be explained in terms of random mutation and natural selection and that the

¹ WWR 1, p. 113(157).

appearance of purpose therefore does not require a will for its explanation.¹ However, this claim leaves unanswered the question why the mechanisms of evolution, which are themselves without purpose, nevertheless give rise to organisms whose behaviour is goal-directed towards survival.² Since the answer does not lie in the mechanisms of evolution itself, it must be sought elsewhere, and it seems that we have two choices. Either teleology in nature can be explained in terms of some other more fundamental feature or process in nature, or it must be accepted as a brute fact for which no further explanation is possible. While it may be the case that all teleological behaviour can be described in causal terms, it has been persuasively argued recently that a causal description does not capture the element of goal-directedness that is characteristic of purposive behaviour or action.³ It is, therefore, not a complete explanation of teleology in nature. Consequently, unless we are prepared to accept that purposiveness in nature is simply a brute fact, its explanation must be something other than mere causal relation.

This raises an important question. At what stage of our enquiries should we cease asking for further explanations and be prepared to rest content with brute facts? Schopenhauer pushes his enquiries beyond what he sees as the limits of science, and explains purposiveness in nature in terms of the metaphysical will. He thinks that science can do no more than discover empirical causal correlations which depend upon fundamental forces, and that these in turn

¹ See Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 68 and Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, p. 42. Young says that while 'the theory of evolution does not, of course, show that one has to deny irreducible teleology in nature . . . it does show that Schopenhauer's extension of will to organic nature stands in need of a supporting argument other than that which he explicitly provides.' Simmel, by contrast, suggests that Schopenhauer's doctrine of will is justified on the grounds that it offers an explanation for the overall unity and lawfulness of nature. He says: 'Science explains the laws of individual correlations, but not the fact that the elements of this world form a unity and follow laws. It is possible to dispense with the question of the unity of nature or to declare it to be unanswerable, but someone who attempts an answer cannot be refuted by appealing to considerations to which that answer does not appeal.'

² See Falk, 'Purpose, Feedback and Evolution', pp. 305-8.

³ See Wright, *Teleological Explanations*, p. 30. See also Falk, 'Purpose, Feedback, and Evolution', p. 308.

remain *qualitates occultae*. A more ultimate explanation must, he thinks, be of a kind quite different from that provided by science. It must be metaphysical.¹

Leaving aside the contentious issue of whether science has in fact exhausted its capacity to explain teleological behaviour, it is worth pursuing the more general question whether an appeal to metaphysical explanation is justified if and when the limits of scientific explanation have been reached. In other words, should we rest content with brute facts of the physical world or should we seek an explanation at a different level altogether?

In part, the answer to this question depends upon whether the universe itself has to be the way it is. If everything about the universe is necessary, then it is pointless to seek further explanations for its nature and existence. However, we do not know that the universe is necessary, and moreover it seems that in principle we could never know it to be so.² Furthermore, many would urge that it is more intuitively plausible to consider the universe and its nature as contingent, since we can easily imagine that things could have been different.³

If we accept that the universe is both contingent and intelligible, then it makes sense to look for explanations of why the universe is the way it is and why it exists at all. Since a contingent universe cannot contain within itself an explanation for its own existence, it seems that if there is to be an explanation at all then it must be different in kind from the sorts of explanation that operate within the universe. For this reason such explanations have traditionally been called metaphysical. For theists, the explanation is God; for Schopenhauer, it is the will.

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 122(168).

² For a discussion of this issue see Paul Davies, *The Mind of God* (Penguin: Middlesex, 1992), pp. 165-69 for a discussion of this issue.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 169-72.

The next question that naturally arises concerns the status of the metaphysical explanation of the universe. Is it necessary or contingent? If it is necessary, there are at least *prima facie* difficulties in seeing how the universe can after all be contingent, since its dependency on something that is necessary suggests that it too must be necessary.¹ If it is contingent, it might seem that nothing is gained by appealing to the existence of another entity, since we are now faced with the question why this further entity exists and why it has the nature that it has. However, while conceding this difficulty, I think there may still be reasons that justify the appeal to another entity. For example, it may offer a simpler and more unified account of the fundamental contingent facts of the physical universe, facts concerning the fundamental forces and initial conditions.

Furthermore, while there may be no logical compulsion to seek a deeper level of explanation, it should be borne in mind that to stop asking for explanations on the assumption that we have reached the level of brute fact is inadvisable. For the history of science teaches us that brute facts have frequently been revised when further questioning, theorising and observation pushed the bounds of explanation further afield. For example, for over two centuries most educated people believed that Newton had discovered the fundamental laws governing the workings of the universe. These were considered by some to be brute facts about the universe. However, we no longer take this view; instead, we see Newtonian physics within a wider framework encompassing the theories of Einstein and quantum mechanics. This explanatory framework may itself be revised as further questions are asked and attempts are made to answer them.

¹ Of course not all philosophers will concede this point, since its acceptance has serious ramifications; for example, it threatens the intelligibility of the Contingency Argument for the existence of God.

In the light of these considerations, we can see Schopenhauer's quest for a further explanation beyond the mere fact of purposiveness in nature as a legitimate one. He explains in a very general way why the mechanisms and systems that operate in nature tend to promote and sustain life. They do so because nature, in all its aspects, is an objectification of the will that is thing-in-itself. As such, its mechanisms and systems reflect the nature of the will, which is to strive for existence and to manifest itself in ever higher forms.

In summary, Schopenhauer attempts to explain teleology in nature in terms of the metaphysical will, or will that is thing-in-itself. There is plausibility in his beliefs that nature is purposive and that this purpose is immanent. However, neither his appeal to unchangeability nor his appeal to the harmony of the Ideas is adequate to establish that the explanation for purposiveness is the will that is thing-in-itself. Nevertheless, if we leave aside Schopenhauer's own arguments a case can be made out for appealing to the existence of a non-phenomenal reality as the explanation of teleology in nature. For if the universe is contingent it cannot contain within itself the explanation for its own existence. It therefore seems that if there is to be an explanation at all it must be different in kind from the sorts of explanation that operate within the universe; it must be metaphysical. Even if that which explains the contingent universe is itself contingent, the appeal to a deeper level of explanation can be justified by the possibility of a more unified, simpler account of the way that the universe is. Schopenhauer's appeal to the will that is thing-in-itself can be seen in this light. I conclude that teleology in nature provides some measure of support for his belief that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will, even though his own way of arguing for its existence may be inadequate.

Having examined six more of Schopenhauer's reasons for holding that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will, my conclusion is that unfortunately there are serious difficulties facing each of them.

CHAPTER 7

THE ROLE OF FEELING

Schopenhauer's reasons for holding that we can have knowledge of the thing-in-itself and know it as will require consideration. He takes over from Kant the doctrine of transcendental idealism, according to which the world of our everyday experience is merely phenomenal with its basic structures contributed by the mind, while in addition there exists the thing-in-itself.¹ While many earlier philosophers had made the distinction between the world as it appears and the world as it is, Schopenhauer believes that Kant's method of establishing this distinction surpassed all previous attempts in its thoroughness.²

Schopenhauer is particularly impressed by Kant's argument in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* in which he attempts to show that our *a priori* knowledge of certain truths about space and time demonstrates that space and time are forms of sensibility that our minds impose upon initial empirical data to produce our experience of the world. While Schopenhauer rejects much of Kant's further argument in the *Transcendental Analytic* he nevertheless strongly endorses Kant's general conclusions that space, time and causality are modes of organisation that our minds impose upon the initial data presented to them, thereby giving rise to experience and enabling us to possess *a priori* knowledge.

While Schopenhauer never officially abandons the doctrine of transcendental idealism he does depart from it in asserting the thing-in-itself is will. He attempts to justify this assertion by appealing to introspection,

¹ WWR 1, p. 421(519).

² WWR 1, p. 419-20(515).

believing that in introspection we are immediately aware of the thing-in-itself and know it as will.

The metaphysical in general, that which alone exists apart from representation, the *thing-in-itself* of the universe—in nothing but what is known to us within ourselves as *the will*.¹

Schopenhauer sometimes asserts of this knowledge of the thing-in-itself that it is a kind of feeling, and in this way he differentiates it from perceptual knowledge, or knowledge of phenomena. While some interesting work has been done on the role of feeling in Schopenhauer's philosophy, its central importance to the justification of his claim that the thing-in-itself is will has not been sufficiently recognised.² In support of this claim I shall first examine the epistemological status that Schopenhauer accords to feeling and then examine its role in various aspects of his philosophy. From this discussion it will emerge that feeling plays a central role in his explanation of how we come to have knowledge of the will as thing-in-itself.

¹ WN, p. 345(310).

² The importance of feeling to Schopenhauer's metaphysics is discussed in a paper by Heinz Gerd Ingenkamp entitled 'Das Seinde als Empfindung', in *Zeit der Ernte, Festschrift für Arthur Hübscher zum 85 Geburtstag* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1982), pp. 355-63. In this paper Ingenkamp discusses Schopenhauer's distinction between *feeling with sensing* and *feeling without sensing*. In creatures with sufficiently developed nervous systems, *feeling with sensing* gives rise to perception of the objective world. In plants, where the nervous system is much less developed, *feeling with sensing* merely produces awareness of internal subjective states. Finally, in inorganic matter there remains only *being* with no awareness.

Feeling without sensing occurs in introspective awareness. Here the forms of perception, space, time and causality are successively removed, the subject-object relation no longer exists, and all that remains is the thing-in-itself. The experiences of prophetic vision, sleep-walking, hypnosis, and contact with the deceased are further instances where the individuating forms of perception are absent.

Ingenkamp argues that *feeling with sensing* is the foundation for Schopenhauer's physiological theory of perception, which describes the world as representation, and that *feeling without sensing* is the foundation for Schopenhauer's doctrine that the world is will. In conclusion he argues that contradiction in Schopenhauer's metaphysics arises only when commentators fail to consider both the objective and subjective viewpoints. In support of this conclusion he also refers to Arthur Hübscher, *Denker gegen den Strom*, Bonn, 1973, p. 151, Alessandro Costa, *Il pensiero religioso di Arthur Schopenhauer*, Rom, 1935, especially Ch. 6, p. 107ff., and Volker Spierling, *Schopenhauer's transzendentalidealistisches Selbstmißverständnis*, Diss., Munich, 1977, for the physiological side.

The epistemological status that Schopenhauer accords to the concept of feeling is clear from what he says about its relationship to knowledge. When discussing the nature of knowledge in his main work, he draws the distinction between *knowledge of reason* or rational knowledge and *feeling*. Regarding feeling he writes:

The concept denoted by the word feeling has only a negative content, namely that something present in consciousness is *not a concept, not abstract knowledge of reason*.¹

Regarding rational knowledge, he writes:

Rational knowledge (Wissen) is therefore abstract consciousness, fixing in concepts of reason what is known generally in another way.²

Regarding the relationship between the two, he writes:

The concept of *feeling* is the contradictory opposite of this [rational knowledge]. But as reason always brings again before knowledge only what has been received in another way, it does not really extend our knowledge, but merely gives it another form. Thus it enables one to *know* in the abstract and in general what was *known* intuitively and in the concrete.³

It follows from these passages that although Schopenhauer clearly considers feeling to be different from rational knowledge, he nevertheless still thinks of it as one kind of knowledge. As he states in the above passage, to feel is to

¹ WWR 1, p. 51(87).

² WWR 1, p. 51(87).

³ WWR 1, p. 53(89), (italics mine).

know 'intuitively and in the concrete'. In another place, he writes that 'it is said of all *knowledge*, of all truth, of which we are at first conscious only intuitively, but which we have not yet formulated into abstract concepts, that we *feel* it.'¹

2

While the concept of feeling is very important to Schopenhauer, some of the things he says about it occasionally suggest the contrary. For he sometimes describes it as a broad negative term² and he includes under it such a variety of things that it appears to become almost empty. He speaks of moral feeling, aesthetic feeling, religious feeling, feeling of right, feeling of wrong, feeling of truth and many kinds of feeling besides.³ He even includes under feeling 'intuitive knowledge of the pure understanding' and 'a priori knowledge of spatial relations'. However, the real importance that Schopenhauer attaches to the concept of feeling is evident from his general comments about the relationship of feeling to the metaphysical basis of reality and from his discussion of its relationship to human experience. As general comment he writes:

Philosophy can never do more than interpret and explain what is present and at hand; it can never do more than bring to the distinct, abstract knowledge of the faculty of reason the inner nature of the world which expresses itself intelligibly to everyone in the concrete, that is, *as feeling*. It does this, however, in every possible relation and connexion and from every point of view.⁴

1 WWR 1, p. 52(88), (*italics mine*).

2 See WWR 1, p. 82(123-24), p. 259(326). p. 262(329).

3 WWR 1, pp. 51-52(87-88). Also included are feelings of hatred, disgust, self-satisfaction, honour, disgrace, friendship, health, power, weakness; feelings for colours, sounds, harmonies, discords; feelings of sensual pleasure and bodily feelings such as touch and the feeling of pain.

4 WWR 1, p. 271(343-44), (*italics mine*).

The task of philosophy is to reproduce this [empirical knowledge] in the abstract, to raise to a permanent rational knowledge successive, variable perceptions, and generally all that the wide concept of *feeling* embraces and describes merely negatively as not abstract, distinct, rational knowledge.¹

In other words, Schopenhauer thinks that feeling is the immediate means by which we become aware of reality, providing the raw material from which rational knowledge is drawn. This by itself makes it clear that feeling is an important concept for him, but there is further evidence. In criticism of previous philosophers who over-value abstract knowledge he writes:

It is also a result of that perverted way of thinking that in mathematics the evidence peculiar to it was rejected, in order to accept and admit only logical evidence; that generally all knowledge that was not abstract was included under the broad name of feeling, and disparaged; finally, that the Kantian ethics declared the pure, good will, asserting itself on knowledge of the circumstances and leading to right and benevolent action, as *mere feeling* and emotion, to be worthless and without merit. Such ethics would concede moral worth only to actions arising from abstract maxims.²

Further weight is added from what Schopenhauer maintains about feeling in its relationship to *specific* aspects of human experience that he considers to be of great significance; aspects such as aesthetics, music, morality, eternal justice, compassion and knowledge of our inner selves.

1 WWR 1, p. 82(123), (italics mine). See also WWR 2, p. 364(433).

2 WWR 1, p. 85(126-7), (italics mine).

In Schopenhauer's discussion of aesthetics, the importance that he attaches to the notion of feeling is evident in the following passage.

Genuine works bearing immortal life arise only from such immediate apprehension [of an Idea]. Just because the Idea is and remains perceptive, the artist is not conscious *in abstracto* of the intention and aim of his work. Not a concept but an Idea is present in his mind; hence he cannot give an account of his actions. He works, as people say, from mere *feeling* and unconsciously, indeed instinctively.¹

In other words, the primary source of artistic creation is *feeling*, which in that case is the direct consciousness of Ideas. (By 'Ideas', it will be recalled that Schopenhauer means 'the original unchanging forms and properties of all natural bodies . . . as well as the universal forces that reveal themselves according to natural laws'.²)

The importance of feeling is again evident in what Schopenhauer says about music, an art form which he believes to possess deep and universal significance. He writes of melody that it, 'portrays every agitation, every effort, every movement of the will, everything that the faculty of reason summarises under the wide and negative concept of feeling'.³ In another passage he writes: 'From its own resources, music is certainly able to express every movement of the will, every feeling'.⁴ Schopenhauer believes that music is different from the other arts in that instead of exhibiting the Ideas or grades of the will's objectification, it directly exhibits the will itself. He thinks

1 WWR 1, p. 235(297-98), (*italics mine*).

2 WWR 1, p. 169(221).

3 WWR 1, p. 259(326).

4 WWR 2, p. 449(528).

that because of this, 'it acts directly on the will, i.e., the feelings, passions, and emotions of the hearer, so that it quickly raises these or even alters them.'¹ In other words, he thinks that the very direct relationship between music and the will is expressed as *feeling* in the hearer, and that when we are moved by music, what we *feel* are the very stirrings of the will itself.

4

In his discussion of morality, Schopenhauer agrees with Kant that human conduct has an undeniable moral significance, and writes that 'the supreme point at which the meaning of existence generally arises is undoubtedly ethical.'² Given the importance that he thus places on morality it is interesting in the following passages to look at what connections he sees between it and feeling. 'Conduct', he writes, 'as we say, happens in accordance with *feelings*, that is to say, not precisely according to concepts, but to ethical worth and quality.'³ At another place, he asserts that the ethical significance of conduct and of conscience 'is merely the felt knowledge of that significance.'⁴ In other words, ethical worth shows itself in *feeling*, and it is from *feeling* that conduct springs. Although his use of the word 'merely' in the latter passage is not altogether clear, what he apparently means is that we do not need to look beyond feeling to find the ethical significance of life.

When he discusses the notion of wrongness, Schopenhauer makes clear that he considers this too to be a matter of feeling. He writes:

This breaking through the boundary of another's affirmation of will of another has at all times been distinctly recognised, and its concept has

1 WWR 2, p. 448(527).

2 WWR 1, p. 422(519); BM, p. 200(302).

3 WWR 1, p. 58(95).

4 WWR 1, p. 357(444).

been denoted by the word *wrong* (*Unrecht*). For both parties instantly recognise the fact, not indeed as we do here in distinct abstraction, but as feeling.¹

He goes on to state that 'the sufferer of the wrong feels the transgression into his own body's sphere of affirmation through the denial of this by another individual', while 'to the perpetrator of wrong the knowledge presents itself that in himself he is the same will which appears also in that body'. He adds that the perpetrator is made aware of this knowledge through an 'obscure feeling' which we call 'remorse' or 'the feeling of *wrong committed*'.² In another passage he speaks of 'the bad . . . as mere feeling, i.e., *not* as distinct, abstract knowledge'.³ These passages make clear that in Schopenhauer's view the doing and the suffering of what is morally wrong are made known to us directly as feeling. It is clear that feeling plays an important role in his thought.

The question now arises what Schopenhauer considers the metaphysical basis of moral feeling to be. He believes that the remorse which accompanies the doing of morally wrong actions stems from the knowledge that he thinks we all possess as an 'obscure feeling' that in our essential nature we are all the one will. That Schopenhauer thinks this knowledge to be the basis not only for remorse but for *all* moral feeling is evident from the following considerations of his comments on eternal justice and compassion.

Concerning eternal justice he states that 'the justification for suffering is the fact that the will affirms itself even in this phenomenon [the world]; and this affirmation is justified and balanced by the fact that the will bears the suffering'.⁴ In other words, Schopenhauer asserts that the world itself bears

1 WWR 1, p. 334(417).

2 WWR 1, p. 335(417-18).

3 WWR 1, p. 367(456).

4 WWR 1, p. 331(413).

the responsibility for its existence and its nature; that which is the cause of suffering is also that which suffers, and herein lies justice. He adds that 'the essential nature of that eternal justice and the unity and identity of the will in all its phenomena, on which that justice rests, are known to everyone, at least as an obscure feeling.'¹ So here, as in the case of remorse, Schopenhauer's view is that we have knowledge through *feeling* that all phenomena share in the same unitary will.

Turning to what he says about compassion, it is plausible to argue that he thinks its basis is the same obscure feeling referred to in the discussion of eternal justice. For, in *On the Basis of Morality* he writes:

To awaken compassion, which is shown to be the *sole source of disinterested actions and hence the true basis of morality*, there is no need for abstract knowledge, but only for that of intuitive perception, for the mere apprehension of the concrete case to which compassion at once appeals without any further mediation of ideas.²

A few pages further on he writes that the knowledge of intuitive perception to which compassion appeals is that 'it is one and the same essence that manifests itself in all living things.'³ Although here Schopenhauer does not identify or name the 'one essence', it seems plausible to assume, given the similarity of this passage to the one on eternal justice quoted above, that he is referring to the one will. This assumption is supported by his assertion that 'justice as a genuine voluntary virtue certainly has its origin in compassion.'⁴ It is also supported by the fact that in the first of the above passages concerned with

1 *WWR* 1, p. 357(444).

2 *BM*, p. 183(285).

3 *BM*, p. 209(310).

4 *BM*, p. 152(255-56). Although here Schopenhauer speaks of 'justice' and not 'eternal justice', it is clear from his footnote that in this instance he means the same thing by the two terms. The footnote describes the justice referred to in the text as 'heavenly justice' which he contrasts with 'earthly justice'.

compassion, he makes explicit his belief that compassion is the basis of morality. And as noted in the discussion of his views of morally wrong action, he thinks that our awareness of the moral significance of such actions rests on the knowledge, acquired through feeling, that in our essential nature we are all the one will.

To summarise: The above passages on eternal justice and compassion show that Schopenhauer believes each to be based on the knowledge possessed by everyone as an obscure feeling that the inner nature of all phenomena is a unitary will. That he is aware of the difficulty in explaining how this is so is clear from his assertion that compassion, which he takes to be the basis of morality, is 'the great mystery of ethics'.¹

The question now arises whether the one will to which he refers in his discussion of compassion is also the thing-in-itself. That Schopenhauer takes this to be so is evident from a consideration of the influence of Kant on Schopenhauer's metaphysics. Comparing his own philosophy with Kant's, he asserts: 'my line of thought, different as its content is from the Kantian, is completely under its influence and necessarily presupposes and starts from it'. He continues:

*Kant's greatest merit is the distinction of the phenomenon from the thing-in-itself, based on the proof that between things and us there always stands the intellect, and that on this account they cannot be known according to what they may be in themselves.*²

Schopenhauer strongly endorses Kant's distinction, believing it to provide explanations for such things as the possibility of a priori truths, human

1 *BM*, p. 212(313), p. 144(248).

2 *WWR* 1, pp. 417-18(514).

freedom and moral responsibility. However, he disagrees with Kant's means of establishing the distinction, which he thinks is based upon an illicit use of the category of causality outside the phenomenal sphere.¹ By contrast, Schopenhauer asserts that the thing-in-itself and the phenomenal world are two aspects of the one reality, the relationship between them being one of identity rather than causality.

He also disagrees with Kant's assertion that, as he puts it: 'the source of metaphysics cannot be empirical at all; its fundamental principles and concepts can never be taken from experience, either inner or outer'.² By contrast, Schopenhauer asserts that 'the task of metaphysics is not to pass over experience in which the world exists, but to understand it thoroughly, since inner and outer experience are certainly the principal source of all knowledge'.³ That within metaphysics he includes the study of the thing-in-itself is clear from his statement that: 'if we wish to go beyond this representation, we arrive at the question as to the thing-in-itself, the answer to which is the theme of my whole work, as of all metaphysics in general'.⁴

These two departures from Kantian metaphysics provide Schopenhauer with the key to the establishment of his own principle that the thing-in-itself is will. For, he reasons that if reality is a monistic whole possessing phenomenal and noumenal aspects, then each individual, being a representative part of reality, must also have a phenomenal and a noumenal aspect. He writes as follows,

Thus everyone in this twofold regard is the whole world itself, the microcosm; he finds its two sides whole and complete within himself.

1 *WWR* 1, p. 436(536-37), pp. 504-6(615-17).

2 *WWR* 1, p. 427(525).

3 *WWR* 1, p. 428(526).

4 *WWR* 1, p. 445(546).

And what he thus recognises as his own inner being also exhausts the inner being of the whole world, of the macrocosm.¹

Further, Schopenhauer contends that in our experience of self-consciousness we are aware of our inner aspect, the thing-in-itself, and we find it to be will. The following passage, of which he says that it 'concerns the kernel and chief point of his doctrine, its metaphysic proper', makes explicit his doctrine.

This *thing-in-itself*, this substratum of all phenomena, and therefore of the whole of Nature, is nothing but what we know directly and intimately and find within ourselves as *the will*.²

Schopenhauer's position then may be expressed as follows. We know the nature of our inner selves in two ways: through introspection, in which we are directly aware of our own inner self and find it to be will, and through philosophical reflection which suggests that all reality has a noumenal and a phenomenal aspect. The inner aspect is noumenal or thing-in-itself and the outer is phenomenal. As each of us is a representative part of reality, our own inner nature is also noumenal or thing-in-itself. Although the sense in which we know the nature of our inner self is different in the two cases, the object of our knowledge is the same. It is the will as noumenon or thing-in-itself.

Given this, there is justification for holding that when with respect to morality, eternal justice and compassion, Schopenhauer speaks of 'the unity and the identity of the will in all its phenomena', or of the 'one and the same essence that manifests itself in all living things', he is simply using different expressions to refer to the will as thing-in-itself that he thinks is manifested in

1 WWR 1, p. 162(216).

2 WN, p. 216(202), and see also WWR 1, p. 503(614); WWR 2, p. 600(703).

all phenomena. Most importantly, this conclusion provides the necessary ground for claiming that Schopenhauer not only thinks that it is through feeling that we are aware of the one will, but also that it is through feeling that we are aware of the will that is *thing-in-itself*. For, if his doctrine that compassion derives from an obscure feeling that the inner essence of all phenomena is a unitary will is considered in conjunction with his doctrine that the inner essence of all phenomena is the noumenon or thing-in-itself, it is clear that the unitary will of which we are obscurely aware in acts of compassion must in Schopenhauer's view be the thing-in-itself.

5

In this section I shall focus on Schopenhauer's comments on the relationship between feeling and our knowledge of our inner selves and attempt to show that in his view it is through feeling that in self-consciousness we are aware of the will that is thing-in-itself.

That Schopenhauer believes introspection to yield awareness of the will that is thing-in-itself is evident from the passages already referred to in section 4, and also from the following passage.

We can arrive at its [the world's] being-in-itself only on the entirely different path I have followed, by means of the addition of self-consciousness, which proclaims the will as the in-itself of our own phenomenon. But then the thing-in-itself becomes something *toto genere* different from the representation and its elements, as I have explained.¹

Passages such as this, while clearly showing that Schopenhauer believes introspection to yield an awareness of the will that is thing-in-itself, do not

¹ WWR 1, p. 436(536).

reveal the manner in which he thinks this awareness comes about. However, that he considers feeling to be important in this process is evident from the following passage from the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation*.

From all these considerations the reader has now gained in the abstract, and hence in clear and certain terms, a knowledge which everyone possesses directly in the concrete, namely as *feeling*. This is the knowledge that the *inner nature* of his own phenomenon, which manifests itself to him as representation both through his actions and through the permanent substratum of these his body, is his will. This will constitutes what is most immediate in his consciousness, but as such it has not wholly entered into the form of the representation, in which object and subject stand over against each other; on the contrary, it makes itself known in an immediate way in which subject and object are not quite clearly distinguished, yet it becomes known to the individual himself, not as a whole but only in its particular acts.¹

Schopenhauer here asserts, that we have immediate knowledge as *feeling* of our inner nature, and that we find this to be will. Furthermore, in stating that this inner nature *manifests* itself as representation, Schopenhauer implies that the inner nature that he refers to is the will that is *thing-in-itself*. For he asserts in many places that that which *manifests, expresses or objectifies* itself is the will that is *thing-in-itself*.² In other words, he implies that through the feeling that we have of our inner selves, we know the will that is thing-in-itself. However, he qualifies this implied identity between the will and the thing-in-itself with the remark that 'the will makes itself known in an immediate way in

1 WWR 1, p. 109(154) (italics mine).

2 For example, WWR 1, p. 130(177), p. 135(184), p. 141(190-91), p. 153(204-5), p. 170(220); WWR 2, p. 198(231-32), p. 294(343-44).

which subject and object *are not quite clearly distinguished*'.¹ In asserting this, he effectively disqualifies the will from being a representation, since a representation is an object to a subject, and at the same time disqualifies it from being identical with the thing-in-itself, since the thing-in-itself allows of no divide between subject and object. The status of the will thus becomes unclear, and Schopenhauer's obscurity on this point indicates his awareness, even in the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, of one of the epistemological difficulties facing the justification of his claim that the will is the thing-in-itself.

Elsewhere, when discussing the knowledge that we have of our selves as subjects of willing, Schopenhauer maintains that in self-awareness the object of our knowledge coincides with the subject of this knowledge, and this he calls the 'miracle par excellence'.² While this hardly qualifies as an explanation, it is more consistent with what he asserts regarding the nature of the noumenon. For if we really do encounter the thing-in-itself in self-awareness, then, since it is undifferentiated, the subject-object distinction as well as all other distinctions can no longer exist. But this is inconsistent with Schopenhauer's other claim that we, as subjects, encounter the will that is thing-in-itself in self-consciousness, a claim suggesting that the will of which we as subjects are aware is merely phenomenal. I believe that it is this unresolved problem that prompts Schopenhauer to make the obscure claim that in the immediate awareness of the will in self-consciousness the subject and object *are not quite clearly distinguished*. He is searching in two different directions at once and, perhaps not surprisingly, fails to find an adequate solution. However, with respect to the concept of feeling, the above passage makes clear that Schopenhauer believes that *feeling* is the means by which we

1 Italics mine.

2 See *WWR* 1, p. 102(145); *WWR* 2, p. 203(236); *FFR*, pp. 211-12(160).

come to know that the inner nature of ourselves is *will*, even though in this passage he is less than clear about the will's status.

In another passage concerning our knowledge of our inner selves, this time from the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, he writes:

In no way, however, are there given to me directly, in some general *feeling* of the body or in inner self-consciousness, any extension, shape, and activity that would coincide with my inner being itself, and that inner being accordingly requires no other being in whose knowledge it would manifest itself, in order so to exist. On the contrary, that general *feeling*, just like self-consciousness, exists directly only in relation to the will, namely as comfortable or uncomfortable, and as active in the acts of will, which exhibit themselves for external perception as actions of the body.¹

This passage reveals several important points. In it Schopenhauer tells us that the feeling we have either of our body or of our selves in self-consciousness exists directly only in relation to the will, which he implies is our inner being itself. Further, he asserts that this feeling cannot have reference to extension or shape, since such spatial characteristics are foreign to our inner being. He also states that this feeling cannot have reference to any activity, thereby implying that our inner being, the will, is free of temporal characteristics too. Since the undifferentiated thing-in-itself is free of the phenomenal forms of space and time, the above passage supports the view that Schopenhauer believes that in self-consciousness we are aware through feeling of the will that is thing-in-itself.

¹ WWR 2, p. 6(13) (*italics mine*).

To summarise: Schopenhauer considers the concept of feeling to be an important philosophical concept. He takes feeling to be an immediate form of awareness, implying that it is a non-conceptual awareness of reality from which all abstract knowledge is gained. He believes that awareness of our inner selves occurs through feeling and that what we feel is the will. He implies in both of the passages cited that the will of which we are aware is the thing-in-itself, although in the first he qualifies this by suggesting paradoxically that the will is neither thing-in-itself nor representation.

Schopenhauer's *Manuscript Remains* shed further light on how he thinks that feeling enables us to know the will that is thing-in-itself. In the section covering the period 1826-1828, he has a detailed discussion of feeling, in which he draws a distinction between what he calls its 'positive' and its 'negative' contents. The relevance of this distinction is that Schopenhauer believes the positive content of feeling, which we discern in self-consciousness, to be the 'direct observation of the manifold movements of our own will'. Although the passage in which he discusses this is a long one, it deserves to be quoted in full, as it represents Schopenhauer's most determined effort to make his position clear. He writes:

A 'positive' content of it [feeling]. . . is the direct observation of the manifold movements of our own will. This observation is not a *representation*, for this is always *toto genere* different from the will, and thus no representation can be called feeling in the proper sense; nevertheless this observation is in a certain sense different from the movement of the will itself which is perceived in it, in other words it can be distinguished, though not separated, from it. It therefore lies midway between will and representation, yet on a boundary to which extension can be denied; for it is the mere *point of transition of the will's movement* into the *representation*. It is that which is

inseparable from the will's movement, yet if we insist, the awareness of that movement which is to be discerned, namely self-consciousness. For example, *joy* is in itself the satisfaction of the will in a single act; the motives for joy are to be found purely in the domain of the representation, but the immediate *awareness* of that satisfaction is really the *feeling of joy* and can be distinguished from the objects of the will as also from the will itself. . . . The same applies to ardent desire, pain, hope, pique, hatred, love and so on. . . It applies also to bodily feelings; for the body is just the will itself which has become representation.¹

In brief, what Schopenhauer holds here is that it is through feeling that we know our own will in its movements, which we feel as joy, desire, pain, etc. But these feelings are not the actual movements of the will itself; rather they lie midway between will and representation. If we take his assertion that the thing-in-itself is will to be an assertion of identity, this suggests that he thinks of the positive content of feeling as lying midway between the thing-in-itself and representation. This supports the thesis that he considers it to be through feeling that we are aware of the will that is thing-in-itself; but it also reveals his awareness of a further epistemological difficulty in such a position.

According to Schopenhauer (as according to Kant), the thing-in-itself is not spatio-temporal. Therefore, if he wishes to assert that, in awareness of our own inner will, we are also aware of the thing-in-itself, he must show that the will of which we are aware in self-consciousness is also not spatio-temporal. But he holds that we know the movements of the will itself when we feel them in temporal feelings of a spatio-temporal body, and in holding this he leaves himself open to the much canvassed objection that if we know the will only in

¹ *MSR* 3, pp. 392-93(359-60).

temporal and spatio-temporal forms, then we know it only as phenomenon and are provided with no grounds for believing that the will thus encountered in self-consciousness is the thing-in-itself. Even so, Schopenhauer clearly believes that the movements of the will are distinct from our temporal observations or feelings of them. The two 'can be distinguished', he states in the above passage, 'though not separated'. But he is dissatisfied with this explanation, as is apparent from his assertion that the positive content of feeling lies 'midway between will and representation', and it must be conceded that the introduction of something which is neither will nor representation, but constitutes a third category, serves to obscure rather than clarify matters.

At the end of his discussion on feeling in the *Manuscript Remains*, Schopenhauer, perhaps not surprisingly given his qualifications and expressions of doubt, writes between brackets, 'This entire essay is not a success.'¹ However, despite his dissatisfaction, the essay is instructive for two reasons. First, it highlights the clear distinction between feeling as a direct awareness of the movements of our own will (the positive content of feeling) and all other (less important) types of feelings. Second, because in it Schopenhauer makes explicit that it is through the positive content of feeling that we are aware of our own will. Although he is neither consistent nor explicit in what he asserts about the status of the will referred to here, he at least suggests that it is the will that is thing-in-itself, thereby supporting the thesis that feeling is the means by which we are aware of this.

In this section, my objective has been to show that in our knowledge of our inner selves Schopenhauer believes that it is through feeling that we are aware of the will that is thing-in-itself. From the discussion of his comments both in his main work and in the *Manuscript Remains* there is a good case for asserting

¹ MSR 3, p. 394(361).

that he does hold this. However, there is also a good case for contending that he is aware of the epistemological difficulties which confront him in justifying this belief, and that he fails to convince even himself that he has provided an adequate explanation of how through feeling we are aware of the will that is thing-in-itself.

CHAPTER 8

KNOWING IN PRINCIPLE

That Schopenhauer holds that awareness of the will that is thing-in-itself is possible has already been established. What remains to be done is to consider whether it is in principle plausible to claim that such awareness is possible. In so far as he is a Kantian, Schopenhauer is not entitled to claim immediate awareness of the will that is thing-in-itself. For according to Kant's transcendental idealism, our awareness is always circumscribed by the form of sensibility, time, and this restriction applies just as much to introspective awareness as it does to the awareness of things external to us. The only difference between the two is that whereas introspective awareness is of the temporal only, the awareness of external things is of both the temporal and the spatial. Consequently, as a Kantian, Schopenhauer is not entitled to claim that in introspection we are immediately aware of the non-temporal thing-in-itself. That he recognises this is evident from what I argued earlier. For in passages supporting the interpretation that the nature of the thing-in-itself is unknown, but it can be called will in the qualified sense that the will stands nearest to the thing-in-itself, i. e., Interpretation 4, Schopenhauer claims that our awareness is always under the form of time and hence is phenomenal. Introspection therefore yields awareness of the phenomenal will, but not of the will that is thing-in-itself.

Furthermore, Schopenhauer is not entitled to claim that we can *infer* that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will, if this inference is grounded in a causal connection between the will that is thing-in-itself and the phenomenal world. For, according to both Schopenhauer and Kant, causal connection is restricted to what goes on *within* the phenomenal world. That Schopenhauer endorses this principle is clear from his criticism of Kant, who he believes

illicitly introduces the idea of a causal connection *between* the thing-in-itself and the phenomenal world in order to explain the existence of the latter.¹

However, leaving aside Schopenhauer's inconsistency in claiming both that we are immediately aware of the thing-in-itself and that such awareness is impossible, I want now to ask whether the Kantian objections to immediate awareness can be answered. In doing this I propose to look at some arguments of recent neo-Kantians rather than those of Kant himself since these arguments are more worked out and in many respects more convincing. While their objections are directed against the possibility of immediate awareness of the reality of which many mystics speak, rather than the thing-in-itself of which Schopenhauer speaks, the issues are the same. For, on my reading of Schopenhauer, the thing-in-itself, while it is will in one of its aspects, is the reality of the mystics in another.

1

Steven Katz, perhaps the most influential of the neo-Kantians concerned with the issue of immediate awareness, states that the single epistemological assumption underlying his own argument against the possibility of such awareness is as follows.

There are NO pure (i.e. unmediated) experiences. Neither mystical experience nor more ordinary forms of experience give any indication, or any grounds for believing, that they are unmediated. That is to say, all experience is processed through, organised by, and makes itself available to us in extremely complex epistemological ways. The notion of unmediated experience seems, if not self-contradictory, at best empty. This epistemological fact seems to me to be true, because

¹ WWR 1, p. 503(613-14), pp. 505-6(617).

of the sorts of beings we are, even with regard to the experiences of those ultimate objects of concern with which mystics have intercourse, e.g., God, Being, nirvana, etc.¹

In other words, Katz holds that between the mystic as knower and that which is known there stands an impenetrable veil that makes immediate awareness impossible. This veil is constituted by, among other things, the concepts that the mystic brings to his or her experience, and these concepts, Katz asserts, *shape* that experience.² While he allows that the object or 'state of affairs' that the mystic encounters also contributes to the experience had by the mystic, the point that Katz stresses is that the experience can never be constituted solely by the nature of that which is known: rather it must always be at least partly constituted by the concepts that the mystic as knower brings to that experience.³ Consequently, to use Katz's phrase 'there are no pure experiences.'

In discussing the contribution that the mystic as knower makes to his or her experience Katz includes not only those concepts that constitute the conditions of knowing in general, but also those concepts that have their origin in the specific cultural-social milieu of which the mystic is a part. Indeed, the focus of his discussion is on the contribution that the latter make to the mystical experience. Katz argues that such concepts are at work before, during, and

¹ Stephen T Katz, ed., 'Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism', in *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 26.

² Ibid. While the veil metaphor is mine and not Katz's, I think that it is a fair way of describing his position. I should also add that while he talks of 'concepts' shaping the experience of the mystic he also speaks more generally of 'the forms of consciousness' which he claims the mystic brings to experience and which 'set structured and limiting parameters on what the experience will be' (Katz, 'Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism', p. 26). Under the more general heading of 'forms of consciousness' he includes not only concepts but also such things as language, symbols, beliefs, images and ideological values. For the sake of simplifying both Katz's argument and my response to it, I focus on the role of concepts rather than the role of those other elements of consciousness that he mentions. I think that this practice is justified given that the possession of these other elements is parasitic upon the possession of concepts.

³ Katz, 'Language, Epistemology and Mysticism', p. 64.

after the experience, and do not, as other philosophers have suggested, only come into play in the post-experiential process of reporting and interpreting the experience.¹

Is Katz right? His main argument is empirically based: having studied the reports of mystics from a variety of religious and cultural traditions, and investigated the images, concepts, symbols, ideological values, and ritual behaviour of these traditions, he stresses the strong correlation between the nature of the experiences that the mystics report and the nature of the various belief systems to which such mystics already adhere. For example, he contrasts the reported experiences of Jewish and Buddhist mystics. The Jewish mystic, he maintains, will have been taught from childhood that God's being and man's being are ontologically distinct: and it is in fact reported that this distinction occurs within the mystical experience itself.² By contrast, the Buddhist mystic has been taught that the state of nirvana to which Buddhist practice aspires is not a relational state of being; there is neither self nor one grand being, and again this non-relational state of affairs is in fact reported to occur in the Buddhist mystic's experience.³

On the basis of these and similar examples, which Katz elaborates in fine detail, he concludes that there is 'very strong evidence that the pre-experiential conditioning affects the nature of the experience one actually has'.⁴ He goes on to draw the stronger conclusion that 'the logic of experience *requires* the adoption of this account and the evidence supports it.'⁵

¹ Ibid., p. 27.

² Ibid., pp. 33-35.

³ Ibid., pp. 36-39.

⁴ Ibid., p. 35.

⁵ Ibid.

I argue that Katz is wrong to draw the stronger conclusion. While he demonstrates that there is an impressive contingent correlation between the pre-experiential belief-system of a mystic and the nature of his or her reported mystical experience, he does not establish that there is a necessary correlation between that belief system and the experience itself. Still less does he establish that the concepts that the mystic brings to the experience are constitutive of that experience, standing between the mystic and that which is known. Or to use an example inspired by Philip Almond, Katz provides no logically compelling reason for saying that a Jewish mystic could not have the monistic experience of a Buddhist monk, even if there are strong contingent grounds for thinking that such an event is unlikely to occur.¹

A second argument that Katz puts forward concerns the role of the guru. He notes that in almost all mystical traditions the teacher or 'guru' is of fundamental importance in guiding the novice along the path of enlightenment. The Jewish tradition discourages self-teaching; all Eastern religions stress the need for a qualified master; and most Christian mystics are to be found in monasteries where a rigorous discipline of prayer, fasting and charitable works is practised. The role of the teacher is to guide the novice towards a specific goal, but the goal varies from one tradition to another according to the doctrine in which it is embedded. Hence, the Buddhist seeks the state of nirvana in which suffering is ended and the illusion of self is overcome; the Hindu seeks to affirm the ultimacy of the self and its relation to the universal self; and the Jewish Kabbalist seeks *devekuth*, intimacy with God's emanations, or *Sefiroth*.²

¹ See Philip Almond, 'Mysticism and its Contents', *Sophia* 27 (1988), p. 42. See also Donald Evans, 'Can Philosophers Limit What Mystics Can Do? A Critique of Steven Katz', *Religious Studies* 25 (1989), p. 54, p. 58.

² Katz, 'Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism', pp. 42-43.

Katz believes that such differences, and the polemical manner in which masters of different traditions uphold their own 'way' as superior to that of other traditions demonstrates the implausibility of arguing that mystical experiences are undetermined or underdetermined. Instead, he believes that the evidence suggests that they are over-determined by the socio-religious milieu in which they occur.¹

However, Katz's conclusions are too strong. While it may well be true that there exists a strong contingent correlation between the specific goal to which the novice has been directed and the report that the novice gives of a subsequent mystical experience, this does not establish that the concepts that the novice has acquired in the course of his or her training are constitutive of the experience itself.² Furthermore, there is evidence that mystical experiences sometimes lead to creative transformations of the religious traditions within which they arise, and this suggests that such experiences are not confined to the conceptual framework of that tradition, and are therefore not mediated by a set of concepts that stand between the mystic and what is known.³

A third argument put forward by Katz concerns language. Defenders of the view that unmediated experience is possible often support their position with the claim that there is a set of universal characteristics common to all mystical experiences. For the reports of many mystics include the awareness of an ultimate, non-sensuous unity in all things.⁴ Such alleged cross-cultural agreement on the nature of mystical experience would not be possible, it is argued, if all such experiences are conditioned by the respective concepts that

¹ Ibid., p. 46.

² See Almond, 'Mysticism and its Contents', p. 42; Evans, 'Can Philosophers Limit What Mystics Can Do?', p. 53, p. 58.

³ Almond, 'Mysticism and its Contents', p. 43.

⁴ Stace, 'The Nature of Mysticism', pp. 268-75.

various mystics bring to their experiences from their several religious and social traditions.

Katz recognises these similarities but believes that they do not undermine his thesis. For he argues that such common characteristics are too general to convey a description of what mystical experience actually is, and that to ignore this point is simply to be misled by the surface grammar of mystical reports. Furthermore, he reminds the reader that the meaning of words is intimately linked with the context in which they appear.¹ Consequently, 'nothingness' in the Buddhist context has a different meaning from its use within the Hasidic-Kabbalistic tradition.²

While Katz is right to point out that language is contextual and culture-bound, this fact alone does not establish that the descriptions given by mystics from different religious traditions are incommensurable. For the case is parallel to that of comparing descriptions of our everyday world that are given by mystics and non-mystics alike from different cultures and linguistic communities.³ Just as in the latter case we are prepared to allow that despite differences in syntax and semantic structures there exists sufficient common ground to allow comparisons of sense and reference to be made, so in the case of the mystics' reports it seems reasonable to also allow such common ground. Why otherwise should we classify the multitude of experiences from the various traditions under the common heading of 'mystical experience'?

While the possibility of commensurability of the reports given by mystics does not of course establish that their experiences are unmediated by concepts, it nevertheless serves to meet the objection that the contextual nature of the

¹ Katz, 'Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism', pp. 46-47.

² Ibid, pp. 52-53.

³ Almond, 'Mysticism and its Contents', p. 47.

meaning of words excludes this possibility. However, there is a stronger response that can be made to this objection. It is that even if it were the case that the reports of the mystics are incommensurable, it could still be argued that such reports are attempts to describe pure, or immediate awareness. For, as Almond argues, the formless nature of unconceptualised awareness would be compatible with a variety of incompatible and incommensurable belief systems.¹

A fourth argument that Katz employs also concerns language. He notes that mystics are wary of using language to describe their experiences, and that they commonly claim that their experiences are both ineffable and paradoxical. However, Katz rejects the suggestion that such claims show that we cannot attach any literal meaning to what the mystics say; and he rejects the further suggestion that such a lack of literal meaning would undermine his thesis and instead support the claim that there are pure experiences. His reason for rejecting the first suggestion appears to be that he thinks that the reports of the mystics taken in the context of their religious and social context make sufficient sense to belie their claims of ineffability.² His reason for rejecting the second suggestion is that he thinks that if it really is the case that the mystics neither say what they mean nor mean what they say, then their reports cannot furnish any view whatsoever about the nature of their experiences: either that they are mediated by concepts or that they are free of concepts.³

However, even if we grant that the intelligibility of the mystics' reports belies their claims of ineffability, it does not necessarily follow that they are using language literally. Indeed, it is more plausible to hold that their claims of

¹ Ibid.

² Katz, 'Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism', p. 48.

³ Ibid., p. 41.

ineffability and paradox indicate that they are using language metaphorically.¹ And in that case, it seems reasonable to conclude that their reports do in fact furnish information about the nature of their experiences, thereby leaving open the question whether their experiences are mediated by concepts.

A fifth argument proposed by Katz concerns the practice of yoga. He argues that despite the common understanding of yoga as an *unconditioning* or *deconditioning* of consciousness designed to produce pure consciousness, it is more truly understood as 'a substituting of one form of conditioned and/or contextual consciousness for another, albeit a new, unusual, and perhaps altogether more interesting form of conditioned-contextual consciousness.'²

In response, I follow Donald Evans in asking: 'How does Katz know this?'³ His assertion is based upon the assumption that there can be no pure (or unmediated) experiences. But Katz fails to establish this, as I have argued above. Furthermore, it might well be argued that it is the yoga practitioners themselves rather than philosophers who are best able to judge whether yoga does sometimes give rise to pure consciousness.

These arguments of Katz's needed to be looked at not only because they are initially plausible but because they have been widely influential in the recent literature. There are further arguments worth looking at, arguments that are inspired by Wittgenstein's views, and which if anything, have been even more influential. It is to these that I now turn, focusing on a representative article by Bruce Garside.⁴

¹ I say more about the metaphorical use of language in describing non-phenomenal reality in Section 4 of Chapter 9.

² Katz, 'Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism', p. 57.

³ Evans, 'Can Philosophers Limit What Mystics Can Do?', p. 54.

⁴ Bruce Garside, 'Language and the Interpretation of Mystical Experience', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 3 (1972).

Garside asserts that 'it is impossible to perceive the world directly, with no intervention of an interpretive framework.'¹ His reason for saying this stems from his views on the relationship between language and experience. Garside adopts what he says is a Wittgensteinian-inspired view according to which language is the articulation of a conceptual framework or form of life. He asserts that 'given the centrality of conceptual frameworks in the determination of our experience, in the constituting of our world, to study the basic structures of a people's language is to study, at the very least, that particular people's ontology.'² It is not surprising that with this model in mind he adds that 'we must be very cautious about the sense in which one can express the same experience in very different ways.'³ What he means is that different descriptions indicate different experiences, thus making it implausible to hold that mystical experiences are all the same or that unmediated experience is possible.

However, Garside's assumption that 'to study the basic structures of a people's language is to study, at the very least, that particular people's ontology' is controversial. For it can equally well be argued that while the study of language is relevant to the study of metaphysics, our grasp of reality must in some sense come first and our language second.⁴ Or to put this point another way, it is not true that we can *never* justify and explain our linguistic distinctions by reference to non-linguistic experience.⁵ Consequently, even if

¹ Ibid., p. 95.

² Garside, 'Language and the Interpretation of Mystical Experience', p. 96. For a related discussion see Dean M. Martin, 'Language, Thinking and Religious Consciousness', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 10 (1979), pp. 163-76.

³ Garside, 'Language and the Interpretation of Mystical Experience', p. 96.

⁴ See F. C. White, 'Concepts, Mystics and Post-Kantians', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 71, 3 (1993), p. 306. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that there are cases in which language leads. For example, in physics such terms as 'singularity' and 'event horizon' are introduced to name states of affairs that cannot themselves be actually experienced.

⁵ See Evans, 'Can Philosophers Limit What Mystics Can Do?', p. 59.

it could be established that the different descriptions given by mystics cannot be translated into a common language, this would not entail that the experiences themselves are mediated by a linguistic framework or set of concepts that stand between the mystic and what is known.

It seems then that neither Kant's arguments, even in their modern sophisticated dress, nor the arguments of Wittgensteinians about forms of life are sufficient to show that it is not possible to have immediate awareness of the thing-in-itself. Furthermore, there is an important positive argument that supports the thesis that such awareness is possible.

Fundamental to this argument is the recognition that if we are to possess any knowledge at all, we must possess at least some knowledge immediately or non-inferentially. To see why this is so, consider the case of pain. Surely our awareness of pain is immediate or non-inferential. Indeed if this were not so, instead of being entitled to claim that we are in pain we would only be entitled to claim that we are experiencing something that leads us to believe that we are in pain. Moreover, if there were no immediate awareness of any kind, even our claim that we are experiencing something that leads us to believe that we are in pain would have to be amended to the claim that we are experiencing something that leads us to believe that we are experiencing something that leads us to believe that we are in pain. And so on *ad infinitum*.¹ This surely constitutes a *reductio ad absurdum* of the claim that there can be no immediate or non-inferential awareness. The experience of pain, as well as the experience of such phenomenological sensory qualities as colour, make clear that we do have such awareness.

¹ See White, 'Concepts, Mystics and Post-Kantians', p. 307.

The relevance of this argument to Schopenhauer is as follows. If it is granted that the objections put by Kant and neo-Kantians to the possibility of immediate awareness of the thing-in-itself can be met, then the fact that in some cases immediate awareness must be possible adds considerable plausibility to the possibility that such awareness could be of the thing-in-itself.

One further point needs to be made. Even if in principle it is possible for there to be immediate awareness of the thing-in-itself, it seems that for this to be possible a human being would need to be more than a merely physical being. This is because there is little doubt that as purely physical beings all of our knowledge of ourselves and the world external to us is acquired through our sense organs and the processing activities of our central nervous system. Such knowledge can only be of the world as it appears to us through the medium of these physiological processes and therefore cannot be knowledge of the world as it is in itself.¹

To summarise: In the light of Schopenhauer's endorsement of Kant's transcendental idealism, he is inconsistent in claiming that in introspection we have immediate or non-inferential awareness of the thing-in-itself. To answer the question whether the Kantian objections to immediate awareness can be met I looked at recent and widely influential views of certain neo-Kantian philosophers whose arguments are more worked out and in many respects more convincing than those of Kant himself. I argued that their objections can be met, and furthermore that there is an important positive argument for the

¹ Schopenhauer himself would not have endorsed this conclusion, since he holds that human beings, considered as manifestations of will, are purely physical beings, and he dismisses all talk of souls. However, it could well be argued that his own theory of perception commits him to the view that human beings must be more than merely physical beings. For given that the brain and sense organs are themselves physical objects whose physical existence is the outcome of the processes of perception to which they themselves contribute, it seems that there must be something to which sense data present themselves that is distinct from the sense organs and brain themselves. See Chapter 6, 'Perception', for a fuller discussion of this point.

possibility of immediate awareness of the thing-in-itself. According to this argument, the possibility of possessing any knowledge requires that there are at least some instances of immediate awareness; and this fact considerably strengthens the case for the possibility of immediate awareness of the thing-in-itself. Finally, I noted that the possibility of such awareness would require that human beings are more than purely physical beings.

2

It is plausible to conclude that, whatever he asserts himself, Schopenhauer could be justified in claiming that we are immediately aware of the thing-in-itself. However, he claims more than this: he claims that we are aware of the thing-in-itself as will.

Schopenhauer has at least two reasons for claiming that our awareness of the thing-in-itself is an awareness of it as will. His first reason is similar to that which some philosophers attribute to mystics when attempting to explain why they describe their experiences in terms of the concepts of their socio-religious background. It is that he, like the mystics, is trying to describe his experiences in terms with which he is familiar. But why does Schopenhauer choose the concept of 'will' rather than some other concept?

One answer is that he does so because the fundamental conceptual framework within which he is working is Kantian. In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, while Kant insists that we have no positive knowledge of the thing-in-itself (or noumenon)¹ he nevertheless attempts to show that the human subject has an intelligible character, which is his or her character as thing-in-itself.² It is in virtue of this intelligible character that we attribute moral responsibility to

¹ CPR, A249-A253, pp. 266-71; CPR, A285/B344-A289/B346, pp. 291-94; CPR, B430, p. 382; CPR, B307, p. 268.

² CPR, A 539/B567, p. 468.

an individual for his or her actions.¹ In the *Critique of Practical Reason* and in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* Kant is more explicit about the relationship of the subject's will to the intelligible side of his or nature. For example:

This analytic proves that pure reason can be practical, i.e., that of itself and independently of everything empirical it can determine the will. . . . At the same time it shows this fact (autonomy) to be inextricably bound up with the consciousness of freedom of the will, and actually to be identical with it. By this freedom the will of a rational being, as belonging to the sensuous world, recognises itself to be, like all other efficient causes, necessarily subject to the laws of causality, while in practical matters, *in its other aspects as [a] being in itself, it is conscious of its existence as determinable in an intelligible order of things.*²

We see now that when we think of ourselves as free, we transfer ourselves into the intelligible world as members and recognise the autonomy of the will together with its consequence—morality; whereas when we think of ourselves as under obligation, we look upon ourselves as belonging to the sensible world and yet to the intelligible world at the same time.³

While to my knowledge Kant never speaks of a noumenal will, the above passages suggest that he considers the autonomy of the will to be tied to the intelligible side of ourselves. Further, since his concern to show how moral responsibility is possible is arguably what motivates his whole philosophical

¹ *CPR*, A555/B58 3, p. 477.

² *CPracR* p.43 (italics mine). See also *CPracR* p. 34.

³ *GM*, p. 121. See also *GM* p. 119.

enterprise, it is fair to assert that the notion of a will that in some way stands outside the causal network of the phenomenal world is central to his conceptual framework.

Schopenhauer readily acknowledges the profound effect of Kant's teaching on him. It is therefore not surprising that he incorporates the notion of an autonomous will into his own philosophy, even if its function is different, and even if in introducing it he violates Kant's principle that there can be no positive knowledge of the thing-in-itself. In the following passage, Schopenhauer even goes so far as to suggest that the notion of the noumenal will is already inchoate in Kant's thinking.

Now if Kant, as he here pretends, and also apparently did on previous occasions, had merely inferred the thing-in-itself, and that moreover with the great inconsistency of an inference forbidden by himself, what a strange accident it would then be that here, where for the first time he comes nearest to the thing-in-itself and elucidates it, he should at once recognise in it the *will*, the free will proclaiming itself in the world only through temporal phenomena! Therefore I actually assume, though it cannot be proved, that whenever Kant spoke of the thing-in-itself, he always thought indistinctly of the will in the obscure depths of his mind.¹

In other words, Schopenhauer thinks that in passages in which Kant discusses the concept of freedom, he comes very close to identifying the thing-in-itself as will. Schopenhauer's comment that had this happened it would have been 'a strange accident' suggests that he thinks it paradoxical that Kant might have

¹ WWR 1, p. 504-5(616).

arrived at the truth about the nature of the thing-in-itself by way of a totally illicit inference.

While Kant's influence on Schopenhauer's thought may well explain his making the claim that our awareness of the thing-in-itself is an awareness of it as will, it cannot provide anything more than a psychological justification for that claim. However, Schopenhauer has a second reason for making the claim; a reason that is suggested in the following passages.

Now, if this *thing-in-itself* (we will still retain the Kantian expression as a standing formula)—which as such is never object, since all object is its mere appearance or phenomenon, and not it itself—is to be thought of objectively, then we must borrow its name and concept from an object, from something in some way objectively given, and therefore from one of its phenomena. But in order to serve as a point of explanation, this can be none other than the most complete of all its phenomena, i.e., the most distinct, the most developed, the most directly enlightened by knowledge; but this is precisely man's *will*.¹

But the word *will*, which, like a magic word, is to reveal to us the innermost essence of everything in nature, by no means expresses an unknown quantity, something reached by inferences and syllogisms, but something known absolutely and immediately, and that so well that we know and understand what will is better than anything else, be it what it may.²

The above passages suggest that Schopenhauer's reason for claiming that our awareness of the thing-in-itself is an awareness of it as will is that he

¹ WWR 1, p. 110(155).

² WWR 1, p. 111(156).

thinks that our awareness of the thing-in-itself in introspection *resembles* our experience of our phenomenal will. If this interpretation of the above passages is accepted, the next task is to determine whether the claim of resemblance can be justified.

For such a resemblance to be possible, it is clear that the thing-in-itself must have at least one characteristic that in some way resembles the will. There may be a temptation to conclude from the fact that the thing-in-itself is neither spatial nor temporal nor possessed of any sensible characteristics, that it has no other characteristics either. However, there are no more grounds for drawing this conclusion than there are grounds for thinking that the reality described by the mystics has no characteristics.¹ While mystics often say that it is difficult to use language to describe their experiences, the fact that many nevertheless attempt such descriptions at least suggests that the reality that they experience does possess characteristics. However, in reply it might be argued that since there is no way of publicly verifying the claims of the mystics, this suggestion is ill-founded. It could be that what the mystics say is meaningless.

As a counter-response to this reply the following can be said. First, no reasons have been given for claiming that the thing-in-itself, if there is such a thing, does not possess non-sensible characteristics. The mere fact that most of us have never experienced such characteristics is no reason to conclude that they do not exist. To argue in this way is analogous to a congenitally blind person arguing that there can be no colour characteristics. If it is replied that the cases are not analogous, on the grounds that the blind person has the authority of persons possessing vision that colour characteristics exist, I would respond by contending that those of us who have not experienced non-sensible

¹ For related discussions see Garside, 'Language and the Interpretation of Mystical Experience', p. 97; White, 'Concepts, Mystics and Post-Kantians', p. 309; Peter C. Appleby, 'Mysticism and Ineffability', *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 11 (1980), pp. 146-47.

characteristics have the authority of the mystics that such characteristics exist. While, admittedly the number of mystics is very much smaller than the number of sighted persons, and there are fewer counter-checks, this in itself is no reason to dismiss the mystic's claims out of hand. Furthermore, the fact that many mystics have been highly gifted individuals, whose testimony would normally be considered reliable, adds weight to the claim that the two cases *are* analogous.

A second response to the claim that the thing-in-itself, if there is such a thing, has no characteristics is as follows. On the assumption that there is a thing-in-itself, what would make it such if it had no characteristics? The notion of a thing or state of affairs which, like a bare particular, exists but without having characteristics is much more difficult to make sense of than the notion of a thing that exists and possesses non-sensible characteristics. I conclude that, on the assumption that the thing-in-itself exists, there are no good reasons for asserting that it has no characteristics.

However, even allowing that the thing-in-itself, if it exists, may possess characteristics, it still needs to be argued that a relationship of *resemblance* could exist between the phenomenal will and the thing-in-itself's characteristics. Initially, it might seem that such a relationship could not exist. For Schopenhauer, like the mystics, holds that the thing-in-itself is so different from phenomena that they cannot have *any* characteristics in common. If this is so, it seems to follow that they cannot resemble each other. How, for example, could the non-temporal resemble the temporal?

However, there are no a priori reasons for thinking that the non-temporal cannot resemble the temporal. Such a resemblance would only be excluded if the things being compared lacked any other characteristics. But since, as I have argued above, it is possible that the thing-in-itself, if it exists, possesses non-sensible characteristics, there seems no reason why one or more of these

characteristics should not resemble sensible characteristics of the phenomenal world. Such resemblances, if they existed, would have to be irreducible in the same way that the resemblance between say the colours yellow and orange is irreducible.

To see why this is so, we need to focus on the distinction between individuals and characteristics, and in this I follow White's reasoning.¹ Two or more individuals can resemble each other in virtue of the characteristics that each possesses. For example, two chairs may resemble each other in virtue of possessing a similar colour. By contrast, if we ask in virtue of what do the chairs' similar colours resemble each other, there are no further facts to appeal to. The resemblance is either seen or not seen, and nothing more can be said to explicate it: it is irreducible. Furthermore, differences between the chairs, with respect to other characteristics that they may or may not possess, do not themselves rule out the possibility of resemblance between them with respect to their colour.

A further example may be useful in making this point clear. A music-lover remarks that Pachelbel's Canon resembles the journey of an individual's life. If asked in what this resemblance consists she might reply that the undulations in the music resemble the joyful and sorrowful periods and events that are constitutive of each individual's life. If asked to explicate this resemblance further, while she might cite the resemblance between particular parts of the Canon and the various ways in which an individual's life is lived out, she may be unable to say more. In the end, she may say, the resemblance is irreducible: it neither directly depends upon nor is reducible to other characteristics that the Canon or an individual's life might possess. For example, although music has only temporal characteristics, while an individual's life has both spatial and

¹ See White, 'Concepts, Mystics and Post-Kantians', pp. 310-14.

temporal characteristics, these facts are merely incidental and do not themselves rule out the possibility of resemblance between the two.

Returning to Schopenhauer, if he were asked what the resemblance between the thing-in-itself and the phenomenal will consists in, he might say that the non-temporal activity of the thing-in-itself resembles the striving for life of the phenomenal will. If asked to explicate this resemblance further, while he might cite the resemblance between the non-temporal activity of the thing-in-itself and particular ways in which the phenomenal will strives for life, I doubt that he could say more. Instead, he would be entitled to say what was said on behalf of the music-lover: the resemblance is irreducible and neither depends upon nor is reducible to other properties that the thing-in-itself and the phenomenal will might possess. In particular, although the thing-in-itself is neither temporal nor spatial, while the phenomenal will is temporal, these facts are merely incidental and do not themselves rule out the possibility of resemblance between the two.¹

To summarise: Schopenhauer maintains that our awareness of the thing-in-itself is an awareness of it as will. He has at least two motives for making this claim. First, he wants to describe his experience in terms of a concept with which he is familiar. Since he is working within a Kantian conceptual framework in which the notion of an autonomous will is of fundamental importance, he chooses the concept of will. At best this provides a psychological justification for his claim that our awareness of the thing-in-itself is an awareness of it as will. Second, he thinks that our awareness of the thing-in-itself *resembles* our awareness of our phenomenal will. For this claim to be justified, the thing-in-itself, if it exists, must possess at least one

¹ If asked 'In what way does non-temporal activity resembles temporal activity?' I think that Schopenhauer would be entitled to answer that this resemblance, like the resemblance between the thing-in-itself and the phenomenal will, is irreducible.

characteristic, and I argued that there are no reasons for rejecting this possibility. Further, a plausible case can be made out for the possibility of an irreducible resemblance between the thing-in-itself and the phenomenal will. I conclude that it is in principle possible to justify Schopenhauer's claim that our awareness of the thing-in-itself is an awareness of it as will.

3

Next, I look at an entirely different way in which Schopenhauer attempts to justify his claim to know both that there is a thing-in-itself and that it is will: by appealing not to immediate awareness of the will as thing-in-itself, but rather to its existence as the best explanation of observed phenomena.¹

In *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer argues as follows.

Now if the objects appearing in these forms are not to be empty phantoms, but are to have meaning, they must point to something, must be the expression of something, which is not, like themselves, object, representation, something existing merely relatively, namely for a subject. On the contrary, they must point to something that exists without such dependence on something that stands over against it as its essential condition, and on its forms; in other words, they must point to something that is *not a representation*, but a *thing-in-itself*. Accordingly, it could at any rate be asked: Are those representations, those objects, something more than and apart from representations, objects for the subject? Then what would they be in this sense? What is the other side of them that is *toto genere* different

¹ Schopenhauer's 'best explanation' strategy is also discussed by Snow and Snow, 'Was Schopenhauer an Idealist', p. 634, pp. 648-51.

from the representation? What is the thing-in-itself? Our answer has been *the will*.¹

As it stands this may seem a deficient argument. For it does not explain why the presence of objects whose existence depends upon a subject 'must point to' the existence of something that is independent of the subject. However, there is nothing implausible in the general strategy that it employs.

To illustrate the point, it may be useful to consider analogies from science. Let us take the case of water. Pre-scientifically, we take water to possess such properties as being colourless and liquid. Investigation tells us that it is made up of molecules, each possessing two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen. Further investigation informs us that each atom is constituted by elementary particles called leptons and quarks.² These have never been directly observed, yet science tells us that they are ultimately responsible for the properties that we attribute to water. In other words, science appeals to the existence of unobservable items as the best explanation for our knowledge of the observable and common properties of water. Something similar obtains in cosmology. According to current theory, the universe has its origin in a *singularity*. Neither space nor time are part of the singularity, yet out of it these and other properties in some sense 'emerge'.³

Returning to Schopenhauer, we find that his argument may be given a similar form. Just as the existence of unobservable quarks and leptons is posited as the best explanation for the observable properties of water, and the existence of an unobservable singularity is posited as the best explanation for

¹ WWR 1, pp. 119-20(165-66). See also WWR 1, pp. 98-99(141-42).

² *Oxford Reference Concise Science Dictionary*, 2nd edn., s. v. 'elementary particles.'

³ Paul Davies, *God and the New Physics* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1983), pp. 18-19. I place inverted commas around the term 'emerge' because of the difficulty in using temporal terms to describe a process that is non-temporal.

the observable spatial and temporal properties of the universe,¹ so Schopenhauer may be thought of as positing the existence of the will that is thing-in-itself, *not* as something observed, but as the best explanation for what is observed in the phenomenal world. For example:

Therefore, this thing-in-itself must express its inner nature and character in the world of experience; consequently, it must be possible to interpret these from it, and indeed from the material, not from the mere form, of experience. Accordingly, philosophy is nothing but the correct and universal understanding of experience itself, the true interpretation of its meaning and content.²

As we have seen, Schopenhauer holds that we have immediate awareness of the will that is thing-in-itself, but his argument to the best explanation is additional.

One further analogy may be useful here. It comes not from science, but from philosophy, and moreover, from the philosophy of Schopenhauer's predecessor, Kant. Norman Kemp Smith in his commentary on the *Transcendental Analytic* asserts that since Kant's 'synthesis' creates the whole phenomenal world out of a given manifold, it cannot itself be a process in time, and must therefore appertain to the real non-temporal world.³ A. C. Ewing in his commentary on Kant asserts that:

Professor Kemp Smith apparently holds that Kant is justified in describing it [the act of synthesis] analogically in terms adapted primarily to our conscious mental processes, but if this was Kant's

¹ As well as being the best explanation of such phenomena as the red-shift, background radiation and the distribution of helium.

² *WWR* 2, p. 183(214-15). See also *WWR* 2, p. 184(215), p. 599(702).

³ Norman Kemp Smith, *A Commentary to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: Macmillan and Co., London, 1918), pp. 277-78.

meaning he could not possibly claim that his account of the synthesis constituted knowledge, but only metaphor and conjecture.¹

Given his epistemological principles, Kant is not justified in claiming *knowledge* of the synthesis. However, the point to stress is that if Kemp-Smith's interpretation is correct, Kant appeals to a non-phenomenal process in order to explain observable features of the phenomenal world. Here then we have another instance of an argument to the best explanation that appeals to non-observables in order to explain the observed properties of our everyday world.

To summarise: Schopenhauer's claims that we have immediate awareness of the will that is thing-in-itself and that we have knowledge of its existence on the basis of an argument to the best explanation can both be justified in principle, even if he himself is inconsistent in making such claims.

¹ A. C. Ewing, *A Short Commentary on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (London: The University of Chicago Press, London, 1938), p. 88.

CHAPTER 9

LANGUAGE and CONCEPTS

The first three interpretations of Schopenhauer's claim that the thing-in-itself is will assume that there is a thing-in-itself, that it is will and that we can talk about it using ordinary language. Given the importance of these interpretations to an understanding of Schopenhauer's philosophy, it is pertinent to ask whether he himself is justified in using ordinary language to describe the thing-in-itself, and if he is not, whether such language can be justified *in principle*.

Two further factors make a discussion of these questions important. First, the study of language has been a major preoccupation of twentieth-century philosophy, and this alone makes it imperative to consider Schopenhauer's use of language in describing the thing-in-itself as will. Second, his use of language may be subject to a devastating objection. If this objection cannot be met then all talk of the thing-in-itself is nonsense. Consequently, it is imperative that this objection be considered.

1

To decide whether it is possible in principle to use ordinary language to describe the thing-in-itself we need to consider whether it is possible to have concepts of the thing-in-itself. For it seems obvious that the possibility of language requires the possession of concepts. I neither wish to defend this claim nor to examine the precise relationship that exists between concepts and language. Instead, I appeal to the intuitive plausibility of the claim that a successful language must employ concepts.

However, in addition to this requirement, the possibility of using ordinary language to describe the thing-in-itself also requires that the thing-in-itself has characteristics, and that we can be aware of these characteristics. For it is only if these last two requirements are met that we can have a concept of the thing-in-itself that is adequate for describing it. By this I mean that while we may possess the concept of the thing-in-itself as that which is not phenomenon, this is a merely negative concept of it, and as such is insufficient to ground claims concerning its nature. For this we require acquaintance with the characteristics of the thing-in-itself.

In the last chapter I argued for the possibility in principle that the thing-in-itself possesses characteristics and that we can be aware of these. I now look at whether it is possible in principle to have concepts of these characteristics. Does Schopenhauer's own theory of concepts allow for this possibility, and does any other theory?

2

Schopenhauer is not consistent in what he maintains about the nature of concepts.¹ On the one hand, he holds that concepts are individual objects lodged in the brain, their function being to allow many particulars to be thought through them. For example:

Man harbours in his brain . . . abstract representations drawn from those of intuitive perception. Such abstract representations have been called concepts (*Begriffe*), since each conceives or grasps (*begreift*) in (or rather under) itself innumerable individual things.²

¹ See White, *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root*, p. 59, p. 87.

² *FFR*, p. 146(114).

On the other hand, Schopenhauer holds that concepts are universals, instantiated in particulars, and apprehended by communicators. For example:

On the other hand concepts have arisen through abstraction, and are wholly universal representations which differ from all particular things. In this property they have, to a certain extent, an objective existence that does not yet belong to any time series.¹

Furthermore, Schopenhauer holds that it is in their capacity as universals that concepts make science possible.

But concepts are particularly the proper material of the sciences whose aim may be ultimately reduced to knowledge of the particular through the general.²

There are good reasons for thinking that neither of Schopenhauer's accounts of the nature of concepts is satisfactory.³ However, the point to stress is that neither account is consistent with there being concepts of any characteristics possessed by the thing-in-itself. For whatever the nature of concepts, Schopenhauer holds that they are abstracted from objects of perception; a doctrine that I have referred to elsewhere as concept-empiricism. For example:

For concepts obtain all meaning, all content, only from their reference to representations of perception, from which they have been abstracted, drawn off, in other words, formed by the dropping off of everything inessential. If, therefore, the foundation of perception is taken away from them, they are empty and void.⁴

¹ *WWR* 2, p. 66(80).

² *FFR*, p. 151(117).

³ See White, *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root*, pp. 87-88.

⁴ *WWR* 1, p. 474(580). See also *WWR* 1, p. 65(104), p. 475(582); *WWR* 2, p. 71(86), p. 77(92-93), p. 192(224-25), p. 286(335-36).

Schopenhauer also holds that language is only possible for beings that are capable of possessing concepts. He states:

Thus language, like every other phenomenon that we ascribe to reason, and like everything that distinguishes man from the animal, is to be explained by this one simple thing as its source, namely concepts, representations that are not perceptive, universal not individual in space and time.¹

Schopenhauer explains the relationship between concepts and language in the following way. Concepts are abstract representations² whereas words (and images) are particulars with determinate characteristics.³ However, despite these differences, the two are intimately connected. For it is by means of words that concepts enter into the consciousness of individuals and are thereby linked to a representation of the senses. The word is thus the necessary means of fixing the concept and bridging the gap between what is universal and what is particular.⁴

Since Schopenhauer holds that concepts are abstracted from the world of perception, and that the possession of concepts makes language possible, it follows that he is not entitled to use language to describe characteristics of the thing-in-itself.

It might be thought that, had Schopenhauer amended his theory to one in which concepts could be abstracted not only from the world of perception but also from the thing-in-itself, he would be in a position to use language to describe the thing-in-itself. However, this is not so: for, there are good

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 40(72). See also *FFR*, pp. 145-46(113-14).

² See *FFR*, p. 145(113), p. 146(114), p. 150(115); *WWR* 1, p. 40(72).

³ See *FFR*, p. 152(118); *WWR* 2, p. 63(77).

⁴ *WWR* 2, p. 66(80). See also *FFR*, p. 148(115).

reasons for thinking that neither his theory of concepts as individual objects lodged in the brain, nor his theory of concepts as universals, instantiated in particulars and apprehended by communicators, is satisfactory. While there are a number of objections that have been brought against both theories,¹ my discussion will be restricted to the most important objection.

This objection is that both theories commit Schopenhauer to the implausible doctrine that concepts are objects of some sort. The difficulty with this conception is that it renders concepts unable to carry out their allotted task. As objects in the mind their task is to allow many particulars to be thought through them.² But this is only possible if the mind already possesses the ability to identify the appropriate particulars. Without this ability, it will not be able to apply its objects to the right individuals. However, if it possesses this ability, then concepts, conceived of as additional objects in the mind, are redundant. A similar problem occurs if concepts are conceived of as universals instantiated in particulars. On this view of concepts, their task is to make science and communication possible. But science and communication are only possible if the mind already possesses the ability to apprehend universals in particulars. Without this ability, there can be no common basis for shared knowledge and language. However, if the mind possesses this ability, then concepts, conceived of as universals instantiated in particulars, are redundant. Since neither theory of the nature of concepts is satisfactory, it is implausible to hold that, had Schopenhauer amended his theory to one in which concepts could be abstracted not only from the world of perception but also from the thing-in-itself, he would thereby be entitled to use language to describe the characteristics of the thing-in-itself.

¹ See White, *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root*, pp. 87-88.

² *FFR*, p. 147(114); *WWR* 1, p. 42(74-75).

To summarise: Schopenhauer subscribes to two conflicting theories concerning the nature of concepts. He also holds that concepts are abstracted from objects of perception, a doctrine that excludes the possibility that there could be concepts of the non-perceptible characteristics of the thing-in-itself. Furthermore, since he maintains that the possession of concepts makes language possible, it follows that he is not entitled to use language to describe such characteristics. The suggestion that, had he amended his theory to one in which concepts could also be abstracted from the thing-in-itself, he would be in a position to use language to describe the thing-in-itself, is also implausible. For, underlying both of his theories concerning the nature of concepts is the implausible assumption that concepts are a kind of object.

Even though Schopenhauer talks about the thing-in-itself and describes it as will, he is not entitled to do so. Furthermore, since what he asserts concerning the nature of concepts is unsatisfactory, it follows that if the possibility in principle of using ordinary language to describe characteristics of the thing-in-itself is to be established, we must find a different theory of concepts.

3

The most persuasive theory of concepts asserts that 'concepts are capacities to think about general characteristics'. This theory is expounded by H. H. Price in *Thinking and Experience*¹ and more recently is discussed by F. C. White in *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*..² The theory of concepts as capacities is briefly as follows.

To think about a general characteristic such as that of blueness requires that we can recognise things as blue things when we perceive them, and to possess

¹ H. H. Price, *Thinking and Experience* (London, Hutchinson's University Library, 1953).

² White, *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root*, Ch 6. See also D. E. Bradshaw, 'The Nature of Concepts', *Philosophical Papers* XXI, 1 (1992), pp. 1-19, who follows Price in asserting that 'concepts should be understood as recognitional capacities.'

this recognitional capacity is to possess the concept of blueness. The possession of this capacity also allows for more complex thinking in which we recognise second-order characteristics. For example, we recognise the difference between the blueness of our Chinese vase and the blueness of the tablecloth on which it stands. Furthermore, the capacity to recognise characteristics allows us to think of them in their absence, and this can occur by way of perceiving related relevant individuals, by the use of images, or by the use of words or other symbols. In each case we are reminded of characteristics that we have previously recognised, and this enables us to think about them in their absence.¹

In virtue of these abilities we are able to make statements, ask questions and tell of our hopes and fears. Furthermore, we can make judgments about logical relations between propositions. All of these abilities are parasitic on our basic capacity to recognise characteristics in the first place, to recognise which individuals instantiate them, and to grasp what kinds of relation exist between them.²

The way in which we acquire at least fundamental concepts is through direct acquaintance with perceived or otherwise intuited characteristics or sets of characteristics. For example, we acquire the concept of roundness through direct acquaintance with that characteristic. And once we have amassed a sufficient number of concepts by direct acquaintance we are able to enlarge this number by reflection and imagination.³ For example, provided we possess the concepts of large, mammal, cat, and stripes we are able to acquire the concept of a tiger once we are told or we read that a tiger possesses these characteristics.

¹ See White, *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root*, pp. 75-76.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

The theory of concepts as capacities to think about general characteristics is on the whole compelling. Furthermore, it avoids the difficulties of Schopenhauer's theory of concepts as objects or representations in the mind. But could this theory allow us to have concepts of the characteristics of the thing-in-itself? There is in principle no reason to exclude such a possibility. For, if the thing-in-itself is able to have characteristics, and we can be acquainted with these, there seems to be no reason why we cannot thereby acquire concepts of them.

To summarise: The possibility of using ordinary language to describe the thing-in-itself requires that the following are possible in principle. First, that the thing-in-itself has characteristics; second, that we can be acquainted with these characteristics; third, that we can have concepts of the thing-in-itself's characteristics. Provided we grant that the possession of concepts is sufficient for the possibility of language, then it is possible to talk of the thing-in-itself. However, the question remains whether such talk can be in the ordinary language that we use for describing the phenomenal world or whether it must employ a new vocabulary. It is to this question that I now turn.

4

The temptation to think that all talk of the thing-in-itself must employ a new vocabulary arises from the observation that the thing-in-itself is neither spatial, temporal, nor possessed of sense properties. Being of this nature, it seems that the thing-in-itself has no characteristics in common with our everyday world. Consequently, the vocabulary that we use to describe the latter can have no application to the former, and all talk of the thing-in-itself requires the adoption of a new vocabulary.

However, there is another possibility. We can talk about the thing-in-itself using ordinary language, provided we allow that such talk is metaphorical.

Hence, my claim is that Schopenhauer is entitled to assert that the thing-in-itself is will provided that he is using the word 'will' metaphorically. Indeed, there are passages in Schopenhauer's works suggesting that he himself holds that all talk of the thing-in-itself is metaphorical. For example:

Here, of course, we fall into mystical and metaphorical language, but it is the only language in which anything can be said about this wholly transcendent theme.¹

This suggestion immediately invites the question: What do we mean by metaphor? According to a standard definition, metaphor is:

A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action that it does not literally denote in order to imply a resemblance, eg., he is a lion in battle.²

From this definition it is clear that the most important features of metaphor are resemblance and lack of literal denotation. Consequently, a metaphorical description of the thing-in-itself as will would imply: first, that there is a resemblance between the thing-in-itself and will; second, that the thing-in-itself is not literally identical with the will.

I said earlier that it seems that the thing-in-itself has no characteristics in common with our everyday or phenomenal world. But does this mean that the two realities cannot resemble each other? In the last chapter I argued that while we might be tempted to think so, on the grounds of the spatial and temporal incommensurability of the two realities, there are no good reasons for drawing this conclusion. For there is no reason to assume that characteristics can only resemble each other if the individuals possessing these characteristics possess

¹ *WWR* 2, p. 326(381), and see the discussion of Interpretation 5.

² *Collins English Dictionary*, 3rd edn., s. v. 'metaphor'.

other properties that are common to both; such as the properties of being temporal or spatial. Consequently, Schopenhauer may well be entitled to claim that there is an irreducible resemblance between the thing-in-itself and the phenomenal will; a resemblance that neither depends upon nor is reducible to other characteristics that either might possess. So much for the notion of resemblance. What of the other important aspect of metaphor, lack of literal denotation?

The word 'will' is standardly used to describe the phenomenal characteristic of temporal willing. Consequently, when ascribed to the thing-in-itself it seems that it cannot refer to it in a literal sense. Rather, it is more plausible to hold that on the basis of a perceived irreducible resemblance between the two, it refers to the thing-in-itself by way of a metaphor.

I conclude from all of the foregoing points in this chapter that it is possible in principle to use ordinary language to talk about the thing-in-itself provided that that language is metaphorical.

5

As was previously pointed out, Schopenhauer's use of language in describing the thing-in-itself as will may be subject to a devastating objection. This is an objection arising from Wittgenstein's argument against the possibility of a private language. Given both the enormous influence of Wittgenstein on twentieth century philosophy, and the relevance of his argument to Schopenhauer, it is imperative that this objection be considered.

According to the later writings of Wittgenstein, the meaning of a word is constituted by its use in practice, and the standard of correct usage consists in the public practice of actual speakers. Furthermore, there is no more to the meaning of a word than its use. There is no underlying reality that sets the standard for correct usage and there is no theoretical framework within which

meaning is explained. Instead, we must *look and see* in what circumstances a word is used and only in this way can we grasp its meaning.¹

The requirement that it is the shared or public practice of speakers that determines the correct usage and hence the meaning of a word underlies Wittgenstein's rejection of the possibility of a private language. The circumstances of such a language are that a person records *his or her immediate private sensations* by using a symbol to stand for such a sensation. Wittgenstein argues that in these circumstances there is no *criterion of correctness* for the person's use of the symbol, and hence it is meaningless. We are tempted to think otherwise only because we erroneously believe that such terms as 'pain' acquire their meaning by standing for private occurrences, so that each person's meaning is different and known only to him. Wittgenstein totally rejects the *object-designator* model of meaning that is embedded in this thinking. He argues instead that the word 'pain' is learned and used in interpersonal situations, including behaviour that is associated with pain. There is nothing that *is* the meaning of 'pain'. Rather, its meaning is to be grasped in its use, and its use is subject to the constraints imposed by the language-speaking community²

The implication of Wittgenstein's view on Schopenhauer's use of language to describe the thing-in-itself is clear. According to my earlier arguments, at least one reason Schopenhauer has for calling the thing-in-itself *will* is that he thinks we are aware of its *will-like* nature when we introspect. Since introspection is an intrinsically private practice it follows that if Wittgenstein is right there can be no language to describe the object of such awareness.³

¹ O. Hanfling, 'Theories of Meaning: from 'Reference' to 'Use'', in *An Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. G. H. R. Parkinson (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 40-43.

² Ibid., p. 45.

³ Interestingly, there is a passage in *Parerga and Paralipomena* in which Schopenhauer himself argues in this way. He says that 'the fundamental defect [of illuminism] is that its

Consequently, Schopenhauer's claim that the thing-in-itself is will is meaningless.

However, there are several objections to the Wittgensteinian view. One objection concerns Wittgenstein's claim that the practice necessary to create meaning has to be public. Consider the example provided by Michael Dummett. A 'born' Crusoe picks up a Rubick's cube washed up on his island, and over the years he evolves a technique for solving the cube. Perhaps this technique includes the creation of symbols for himself as reminders of what to do next. In this case, it seems clear that he has a practice or technique that entitles him to be regarded as meaning various determinate things by these symbols; yet his practice is not a public one.¹

A second difficulty is that if the practice of an isolated individual is insufficient to create the fact that her words have meaning, how is the practice of a group of individuals to create the fact that *their* words have meaning? Surely the alleged difficulty that confronts a lone individual still exists when many such individuals are together?²

A third difficulty concerns the notion of *identity* of practice. How can this provide a criterion of correctness and hence of meaning? For might it not be the case that participants in a shared practice act in harmony as a matter of sheer accident? When their individual practices later differ there is no means of

knowledge is not communicable. This is due partly to the fact that for inner perception there is no criterion of identity of the object of different subjects, and partly to the fact that such knowledge would nevertheless have to be communicated by means of language. But this has arisen for the purpose of the intellect's outwardly directed knowledge by means of abstraction therefrom and is quite unsuited for expressing the inner states or conditions which are fundamentally different from it and are the material of illuminism' (PP 2, p. 10(17)). Given that Schopenhauer is one of the few philosophers that Wittgenstein read closely, it is possible that the latter's thinking was influenced by this passage from Schopenhauer.

¹ See Simon Blackburn, *Spreading the Word* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 84.

Wittgenstein's followers still debate whether Wittgenstein intended to deny the possibility of a *born* Crusoe using words meaningfully; see Norman Malcolm, 'Wittgenstein on Language and Rules', *Philosophy* 64 (Jan 89), pp. 5-28.

² Blackburn, *Spreading the Word*, pp. 85-86.

determining who is right, since their preceding practice allows for this diversity.¹

In brief, it is not a straightforward matter to make *public practice* the criterion of correctness for the employment of terms such that they can be said to have meaning. While it is undoubtedly true that in our ordinary discourse and thinking the meaning of the terms we use is at least partly determined by public convention, this leaves open the possibility that an isolated individual might be able to afford meaning to his words without having to defer to the authority of anyone else.² While this possibility remains, Wittgenstein's claim that meaning is conferred exclusively by public practice is undermined.

These and other weaknesses in Wittgenstein's argument mean that we are not compelled to revise our views concerning the possibility of a private language. The threat of such revision rests upon the claim that terms cannot acquire meaning through their connection to private items. Since this has not been established, the case against the possibility of using ordinary language to describe one's private experiences is undermined. The relevance of these conclusions to Schopenhauer is that his claim that the thing-in-itself is will cannot be dismissed as meaningless on the grounds that he is using language to describe an item of private experience.

To summarise: It is possible in principle to use ordinary language to talk about the thing-in-itself provided that the language used is metaphorical. I have further argued that the Wittgensteinian-inspired objection to the possibility of using *any* language to talk about the thing-in-itself can be met.

¹ Ibid., pp. 88-89.

² Ibid., pp. 90-91.

In what follows I propose to adopt a much more positive stance by arguing that there is an entirely different way of supporting the conclusion that talk of the thing-in-itself using ordinary language is both possible and intelligible.

6

What I propose to argue is that an analogy can legitimately be drawn between what contemporary cosmologists say concerning the origins of the universe and what Schopenhauer says about the thing-in-itself and its relationship to the phenomenal world. If what cosmologists say is intelligible, then we must also grant intelligibility to what Schopenhauer says. However, in drawing this analogy I am not advocating that Schopenhauer's doctrine has the same plausibility as current cosmological theories: rather, my aim is simply to show that what he says cannot be dismissed as unintelligible.¹

The following passage from *The World as Will and Representation* may help to bring out the analogy.

The *will* as thing-in-itself is quite different from its phenomenon, and is entirely free from all the forms of the phenomenon into which it first passes when it appears, and which therefore concern only its *objectivity*, and are foreign to the will itself. Even the most universal form of all representation, that of object for subject, does not concern it, still less the forms that are subordinate to this and collectively have their common expression in the principle of sufficient reason. As we know, time and space belong to this principle, and consequently

¹ It is interesting to note that while the scientifically-minded logical positivists substantially contributed to the aversion to speculative metaphysics that has characterised much of twentieth-century philosophy, it may be that the recent speculations of scientists themselves will be at the forefront in reversing this trend.

plurality as well, which exists and has become possible only through them.¹

This passage captures two fundamental tenets of Schopenhauer's philosophy. First, that the will as thing-in-itself is neither spatial, nor temporal; second, that it objectifies or manifests itself in the phenomenal world, and its objectifications are spatial and temporal or merely temporal. In other words, Schopenhauer's assertion that something that is neither spatial nor temporal in some sense 'gives rise' to a world that is both spatial and temporal. Furthermore, he stresses that the relationship between the thing-in-itself and the phenomenal world is not a causal one. Instead, as I mentioned, he asserts that the thing-in-itself 'objectifies' itself in the phenomenal world. He states:

The world itself is to be explained only from the will (for it is the will itself in so far as this will appears), and not through causality. But *in the world*, causality is the sole principle of explanation and everything happens in accordance with laws of nature.²

Modern cosmology makes claims that are formally parallel to those made by Schopenhauer. Consider the following passages from *The Runaway Universe*.

Probably whatever lies beyond the threshold of the quantum era, it will not involve the concepts of space and time at all, but will use some more elementary structure out of which space and time will be built, just as matter is built up out of atoms.³

¹ WWR 1, p. 112(157). See also WN, pp. 216-17(202-3), p. 265(243); PP 2, p. 91(103-4).

² WWR 1, p. 507(618-19). See also WWR 1, p. 436(536-37), p. 447(548), pp. 502-3(613-14), pp. 505-6(617).

³ Davies, *The Runaway Universe*, p. 52.

We are now faced with a profound puzzle. What happens when the surface of the star has shrunk to nothing? When this occurs, all of the star's mass is concentrated into a single mathematical point at an infinite density. The curvature of space-time also rises without limit. Space-time cannot exist under these circumstances and it is, as it were, torn apart by the unlimited tidal forces of gravity. The star has encountered what mathematicians call a singularity, which is a region where space-time comes to an end. It is not possible to say what lies beyond a singularity, for all physics breaks down there. It is generally believed that a singularity lay at the beginning of the big bang . . . which may be thought of as the time-reverse of the singularity encountered by the star; the former marks the entrance of matter into the universe at the creation whereas the latter marks its exit.¹

Consider also the following passage from Steven Weinberg's book *The First Three Minutes*.

It is at least logically possible that there was a beginning, and that time itself has no meaning before that moment. We are all used to the idea of an absolute zero of temperature. It is impossible to cool anything below -273.16 C, not because it is too hard or because no one has thought of a sufficiently clever refrigerator, but because temperatures lower than absolute zero just have no meaning—we cannot have less heat than no heat at all. In the same way we may have to get used to the idea of an absolute zero of time—a moment in the past beyond

¹ Ibid., p. 138-39.

which it is in principle impossible to trace any chain of cause and effect. The question is open, and may always remain open.¹

In other words, both Davies and Weinberg are suggesting that, according to current theory, the creation of the universe has its origin in a singularity. The singularity is neither spatial nor temporal, and yet it in some sense 'gives rise' to a universe that is both spatial and temporal. Furthermore, as Weinberg asserts, it makes no sense to talk about cause and effect in the absence of time, thus making it implausible to talk about a causal relationship between the singularity and the universe that 'arises' from it at the big bang. The difficulty in using language to describe this non-causal creation is acknowledged by Davies in the following passages.

What was it that caused the universe to burst into existence in rapid expansion and enormous density at some particular moment? Questions of this sort are almost impossible to answer and probably meaningless. If time itself only exists after creation, notions like cause, effect and 'particular moment' make little or no sense when applied to the creation. The language which is used to convey these ideas already assumes familiar, fundamental concepts of space and time, and it tends to have a strong philosophical or even religious connotation. Perhaps it is expecting too much of science to provide clear answers to them.²

It might be wondered whether there is any limit to the fractioning of the first brief period of the big bang, or whether the laws of physics break down somewhere and forbid scientists to probe arbitrarily close to the creation event. The ultimate limit of currently known physics

¹ Steven Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 149.

² Davies, *The Runaway Universe*, p. 31.

does in fact suggest such a barrier of smallness, inside which we cannot investigate the structure of the universe using classical language and concepts. The barrier does not imply that physics cannot make sense inside that tiny duration, but that time itself (and space) cease to have the meaning usually associated with it. This strange and baffling region beyond our present understanding is called the quantum era.¹

While these passages make clear that cosmologists are aware of the difficulties of using language to refer to such things as 'singularities' and 'the creation of the universe', the point to stress is that they nevertheless attempt to do so. Here again there is a similarity to Schopenhauer. For there are passages in his works in which he too acknowledges the difficulty in using language to talk about the thing-in-itself and its relation to the phenomenal world.² Nevertheless, just like the cosmologists, he attempts to do so.

In brief, Schopenhauer's doctrine and current cosmological theory are similar in that both speak of the universe as having its origin in something that is neither temporal nor spatial. Furthermore, both suggest that a non-causal relationship exists between that which gives rise to our everyday world and that world itself. Finally, both attempt to use ordinary language to describe the origins of the universe, while nevertheless recognising the difficulty in doing so. In the light of these similarities it may well seem reasonable to conclude that if we allow that what cosmologists say is intelligible, we should also accord intelligibility to what Schopenhauer says. However, we need first to consider whether there are differences between the two cases that are so great as to render such a conclusion untenable.

¹ Ibid., p. 49.

² See *WWR* 2, pp. 325-26, 325; *MSR* 1, pp. 36-37; *MSR* 4, p. 35; *WWR* 1, pp. 110-11, p. 410.

There are several ways in which the two cases appear to differ substantially. The first may be brought out by a quotation from John D. Barrow and Joseph Silk's book, *The Left Hand of Creation*:

The chain of deductions we have followed to conclude that our universe was singular in its past is the result of a *theorem* rather than a *theory*. Certain precise assumptions are made, and from them the conclusion drawn is based on mathematical logic alone.¹

Here it seems that we have a clear difference between the cosmologists and Schopenhauer. For the cosmologists deduce their conclusion by using mathematics, while Schopenhauer's conclusion has no such basis. However, for the purposes of the analogy I do not think that this difference matters. For the issue turns on whether we can intelligibly use words to describe objects and events that are neither spatial nor temporal nor causally determined. The manner in which we infer the existence of such objects and events seems to be of merely incidental interest.²

A second way in which the two cases appear to differ concerns the nature of the assumptions that the cosmologists and Schopenhauer employ in arriving at their respective conclusions. Consider the following passage from *The Left Hand of Creation*.

¹ John D. Barrow and Joseph Silk, *The Left Hand of Creation* (London: Basic Books, 1983), p. 56. By the phrase 'mathematical logic alone' I take it that what is meant is that the conclusion is reached solely by mathematical reasoning and makes no appeal to observational evidence.

² It might be argued that in deducing their conclusions the cosmologists have a mathematical vocabulary in which to describe events that are neither spatial nor temporal nor causally determined, and that they are therefore not in the same position as Schopenhauer, who is attempting to use ordinary language to describe such events. In reply I argue that if cosmologists believe that their conclusions have application to physical reality, then the onus is on them to furnish a translation of their mathematical vocabulary into ordinary language. In attempting this task they confront the same difficulties that confront Schopenhauer.

The most powerful of these [singularity theorems] was constructed by Penrose and Stephen Hawking and employs no assumptions that cannot be tested by observation. This theorem proves that Einstein's theory of gravitation guarantees the existence of a singular boundary to space and time in the past if certain assumptions are made. First, gravity is always attractive and exerts its tidal forces on everything. Second, it is impossible to time-travel back into our own past. Third, there is enough material in the universe to create a *trapped* region from which even light cannot escape.¹

Barrow and Silk add that 'these are not unreasonable assumptions', given that 'we always observe that gravity is an attractive and universal force', and that 'most people would regard time-travel and the accompanying possibility of overthrowing the rule of cause and effect as something even worse than the "big bang" singularity.' However, they also note that some 'cosmologists hope that the attractive nature of gravity might be reversed and the conclusions of the singularity theorems evaded.'²

What assumptions does Schopenhauer employ in drawing his conclusion that there is a thing-in-itself, that it is will, and that it objectifies itself in the phenomenal world? Among his fundamental assumptions are two which he inherits from Kant. First, that some of our knowledge is *a priori*; second, that life has a moral significance. A third assumption, entirely his own, is that everything strives for life and its propagation. Are these assumptions reasonable? While most people might allow that life has a moral significance, fewer would accept the existence of *a priori* truths. And while it is true that organic life-forms exhibit life-affirming behaviour, it is more difficult to

¹ Ibid., p. 38.

² Ibid., p. 67.

ascribe this characteristic to inorganic life. It seems then that while Schopenhauer's assumptions have some plausibility, they are far from being as well-founded as those of the cosmologists. Furthermore, whereas all of the cosmologists' assumptions can be tested by observation, it is more difficult to argue this for Schopenhauer's assumptions. Nevertheless, while acknowledging that his assumptions have less plausibility than those of the cosmologists, I do not think it has been established that they have no plausibility. And if this much is granted, *a fortiori* must it be granted that what he says is intelligible.

A third way in which the two cases appear to differ concerns the nature of the evidence that is used to support their respective conclusions. Cosmologists believe that the big bang theory is supported by such empirical evidence as the presence of uniform background radiation throughout the observed universe, the unvarying proportion of helium throughout the universe, the presence of deuterium, and the red shift. Schopenhauer too believes that his doctrine that the phenomenal world is the objectification of the will as thing-in-itself is supported by empirical evidence. He cites such things as the unceasing conflict, war, jealousy and strife that dominate human affairs; the incessant and ruthless fight for survival that pervades all non-human life; the adaptation of organisms to their environment; and the general striving that he believes characterises such fundamental forces as gravity.

However, there are several contrasts that can be drawn between the nature of the evidence that the cosmologists appeal to and the nature of the evidence that Schopenhauer appeals to. One such contrast is that in some instances the evidence cited by the cosmologists has been predicted before being verified; for example, the presence of background radiation was predicted in the late

1940's by proponents of the big bang theory, and was later verified in 1965.¹ Schopenhauer's evidence, by contrast, refers only to the present and the past, and his theory does not make any but the most general of predictions concerning what will be observed in the future. However, it needs to be noted that other theories, some of which are well-accepted, are also in this predicament. For example, the theory of evolution is accepted as a powerful tool for explaining the mechanisms by which life in its various forms has arisen; yet it is powerless to predict what kind of life-forms will evolve in the future. A second contrast is that while the evidence cited by cosmologists is accepted by many contemporary scientists as supporting the existence of a singularity at the big bang, the evidence cited by Schopenhauer for the existence of the will as thing-in-itself lacks widespread support. Nevertheless, since his evidence has not been shown to be inconsistent with his theory, it cannot be said that his talk of the thing-in-itself is unintelligible.

A fourth way in which the two cases appear to differ concerns the nature of what is explained by each of the doctrines. Cosmologists maintain that their theory explains such things as the existence of matter, the absence of cosmic anti-matter, and the chemical composition of the observed universe. Schopenhauer holds that his theory explains such things as the moral significance of life, teleology in nature, the particular features of phenomena, our-self-conscious awareness of something that is non-phenomenal, our experience of living in a shared world, and the possibility of perception. For example, he holds that the moral significance of life arises from the fact that in our non-phenomenal natures we are all one. It is, he thinks, the obscure recognition of this fact that gives rise to our feelings of remorse when we deliberately injure another. While the cosmologists' explanations are scientific

¹ Weinberg, *The First Three Minutes*, pp. 122-24.

in their character, whereas Schopenhauer's are not, this does not entail that what Schopenhauer says is unintelligible. Furthermore, since the plausibility of his explanations is still debated by philosophers, it is more reasonable to hold that his claims *are* intelligible. However, there is a further contrast that is relevant. The explanations given by the cosmologists are subject to falsification in the light of new information, and such revision may lead to rejection or modification of the singularity doctrine in which such explanations are embedded. However, it is doubtful whether Schopenhauer would have allowed anything to count against his explanations if doing so meant the abandonment of his doctrine of will. For any evidence appearing to count against this doctrine he interprets in a way that makes it compatible with it. For example, he explains teleology in nature in terms of the will as thing-in-itself striving for ever higher degrees of objectification. When confronted with evidence of apparently purposeless behaviour, such as that accompanying boredom, his strategy is to interpret such evidence as the transient state of satisfied willing that is a precursor to further striving towards a new goal. He does *not* interpret it as evidence that his doctrine of will is in need of revision.¹

To conclude Cosmologists differ from Schopenhauer in method, assumptions, evidence, and what they attempt to explain. These differences point to a degree of superiority in the cosmologists' doctrines, but they do not demonstrate that what Schopenhauer says is unintelligible. For, the differences between them do not demonstrate that what he says is unintelligible and the similarities between the two provide positive support for the view that it is intelligible.

¹ It might be argued that I am being unfair to Schopenhauer. For the fact that he attempts to deal with apparent counter-evidence does not entail that he would never accept counter-evidence as decisive; rather, it indicates that he thinks a rational response is required. However, while not excluding the possibility of revision on Schopenhauer's part, I think it is significant that none of the changes in his views that occur threaten the centrality of the will in his metaphysics.

CONCLUSION

There are serious metaphysical and epistemological objections to many aspects of Schopenhauer's theory of reality. Nevertheless, many of his views are important in their own right and are far more plausible than some recent commentators have allowed. In particular, his attempt to deal with the problems of human freedom, moral responsibility, praise, blame, deliberation and pangs of conscience is provocative and astute. His doctrine on morality, while ultimately untenable, nevertheless throws light on the role of egoism and compassion in human affairs. His comments on self-awareness are perceptive, his theory of perception not implausible, and his views on teleology thought-provoking. His discussion of the role of feeling is interesting and, like his claims concerning language and its application to non-phenomenal reality, stimulates further enquiry. Finally, his critique of Kant, his adaptation of Platonic doctrine and his commentary on Eastern ideas are intriguing and original.

In addition, Schopenhauer's general conception of reality has the merit of attempting to provide an all-embracing, coherent and empirically-based account of experience, an account that deals honestly and boldly with puzzling aspects of life.¹ In virtue of this alone it has much to offer contemporary philosophy.

¹ However, I readily acknowledge that it is not possible to extract from Schopenhauer's writings a consistent account of experience.

APPENDICES

INTRODUCTION

In Chapters 2 and 3 I discussed six interpretations of Schopenhauer's claim that the thing-in-itself is will. Interpretations 1 and 2, according to which the thing-in-itself is will and will-to-live respectively, are the most important to Schopenhauer himself while Interpretation 3, according to which the thing-in-itself has multiple aspects only one of which is will, is best able to accommodate his most central doctrines. However, these three interpretations are incompatible with Schopenhauer's Kantian epistemology and concept-empiricism, while Interpretations 1 and 2 are also incompatible with Schopenhauer's doctrines on mysticism and salvation.

Of the other interpretations, Interpretation 5—according to which the thing-in-itself is called will, but only in a metaphorical sense—is incompatible with Schopenhauer's Kantian epistemology as well as his doctrines on mysticism and salvation, while Interpretation 4—according to which the nature of the thing-in-itself is unknown but it is called will because the will stands nearest to the thing-in-itself—is incompatible with his central claims that the thing-in-itself is will and that metaphysics concerns the thing-in-itself. Of Interpretation 6—according to which the will is the metaphysical but non-noumenal essence of the phenomenal world—while it incorporates Schopenhauer's assertion that his metaphysics of will goes beyond Kant, it is incompatible with his central claim that the thing-in-itself is will. Nevertheless, I suggested earlier that this interpretation is the one that he would probably have ended up embracing had his thought continued to develop under the increasing influence of Eastern ideas.

The appendices that follow deal with some of the reasons why these problems of incompatibility arise for Schopenhauer. Briefly, my thesis is that Schopenhauer attempts to graft his own ideas onto other philosophical systems and that the result gives rise to inconsistency in his writing, shifts in his thinking, and the possibility of more than one interpretation of his doctrine that the thing-in-itself is will. In his 'Criticism of The Kantian Philosophy' Schopenhauer states:

I confess that next to the impression of the world of perception, I owe what is best in my own development to the impression made by Kant's works, the sacred writings of the Hindus, and Plato.¹

In accordance with Schopenhauer's own assessment of the main influences on him, I propose first to look at some of the ways that the Kantian influence shows itself in his philosophy, then to look at the Platonic legacy, and finally to consider the likely influence of Eastern teaching.

¹ WWR 1, p. 417(513).

APPENDIX 1: KANT

It is clear that while Schopenhauer is critical of much of Kantian teaching he nevertheless continues to espouse important aspects of it, even when they are incompatible with his own original doctrines. That he seems strangely blind to the resulting inconsistencies can perhaps best be understood by reflecting on his own account of the dramatic impact that he thinks Kant's revolutionary teaching has on all who read and understand it.

I have already explained in the preface to the first edition that my philosophy starts from Kant's, and therefore presupposes a thorough knowledge of it; I repeat this here. For Kant's teaching produces a fundamental change in every mind that has grasped it. This change is so great that it may be regarded as an intellectual rebirth. It alone is capable of really removing the inborn realism which arises from the original disposition of the intellect.¹

Yet Schopenhauer also states in the preface to the first edition:

Therefore, while I start in large measure from what was achieved by the great Kant, serious study of his works has nevertheless enabled me to discover grave errors in them. I had to separate these and show them to be objectionable, in order that I might presuppose and apply what is true and excellent in his doctrine, pure and clarified of them.²

Schopenhauer criticises Kant for all of the following: his assumption that metaphysics cannot be empirical; his associated claim that metaphysics coincides with a priori knowledge; his inadequate theory of empirical

¹ *WWR* 1, p. xxiii(20).

² *WWR* 1, p. xv(10). See also *FFR* p. 133(109).

perception; the higher value that he places on abstract over intuitive knowledge; his confused understanding of the roles of reason and understanding; his division of reason into practical and pure; his failure to investigate the nature of concepts; his flawed idealism; his unjustified appeal to a causal relation between the thing-in-itself and phenomena; his failure to reject the Euclidean method of demonstration; his three-part ontology of representation, object of representation, and thing-in-itself; his doctrine of the twelve categories; his failure to distinguish adequately between abstract and intuitive knowledge; his Principle of Reason as espoused in the *Dialectic*; his doctrine concerning the Ideas of Reason; his sham Antinomies; his doctrine of the unconditioned ought; his appeal to a causal relation between the intelligible and empirical characters; his doctrine of the *ens realissimum*; his ethical theory with its Categorical Imperative; his doctrine on Jurisprudence; his undeveloped theory of aesthetics.

Nevertheless, despite these many points of criticism, Schopenhauer praises Kant for all of the following: his distinction between phenomena and thing-in-itself; his associated doctrine concerning a priori knowledge; his recognition that the laws governing the phenomenal world are not applicable to the thing-in-itself; his recognition that the undeniable moral significance of life is rooted in the thing-in-itself and cannot be explained by reference to phenomenal laws; his overthrow of scholastic philosophy; his doctrine of concept-empiricism; his refutation of rational psychology; his distinction between intelligible and empirical characters; his suggestion that the beautiful needs to be understood in terms of the subject; his theory of the sublime; finally his suggestion that a deeper knowledge of the being-in-itself of the world might result in the mechanical and the apparently intentional workings of nature being explained by the same ultimate principle.

In attempting to understand how it is that the influence of Kant gives rise to inconsistency in Schopenhauer's philosophy it is instructive to focus on what he himself takes to be Kant's most important contributions to philosophy. First, the distinction between phenomena and thing-in-itself, and the associated doctrine concerning a priori knowledge; second, the doctrine of concept-empiricism; third, the recognition that the moral significance of life concerns the thing-in-itself, and the associated doctrine regarding the distinction between intelligible and empirical characters; finally, the overthrow of scholastic philosophy. By looking at the relevance of these doctrines to Schopenhauer's own philosophy and considering the ways in which he deviates from Kant in developing them, it becomes easier to understand how the problems of consistency in his own philosophy arise.

1

Concerning the first doctrine Schopenhauer states,

Kant's greatest merit is the distinction of the phenomenon from the thing-in-itself, based on the proof that between things and us always stands the intellect, and that on this account they cannot be known according to what they may be in themselves.¹

Schopenhauer never doubts either the Kantian assumptions that there exists a thing-in-itself and phenomena or that the distinction between them is valid.

For it is quite certain that the assumption of a thing-in-itself behind phenomena, of a real kernel under so many shells, is by no means untrue; on the contrary, its denial would be absurd.²

¹ *WWR* 1, pp. 417-18(514).

² *PP* 1, p. 89(104).

However, he censures the manner in which Kant arrives at the distinction. Schopenhauer endorses the view espoused by the earliest critics of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that Kant surreptitiously makes the thing-in-itself the cause or ground of the phenomenal world, and thereby illicitly uses the concept of causality outside the phenomenal sphere of its applicability.¹ In place of this causal relationship Schopenhauer claims that the thing-in-itself objectifies itself in the world of representation. Thing-in-itself and phenomena are two aspects of one reality,² rather than two separate things causally related to each other.³

This double-aspect account of the nature of reality carries the implication that all physical objects are both phenomena and thing-in-itself. This is of fundamental importance to Schopenhauer's claim that the thing-in-itself can be known and that it is known as will (see Interpretations 1, 2 and 3). For he asserts that in self-awareness we are directly acquainted with the inner nature of reality, and that we find it to be will.

In consciousness everyone recognises himself at once as the will, in other words, as that which, as thing-in-itself, has not the principle of sufficient reason for its form, and itself depends on nothing, but rather everything else depends on it.⁴

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 436(536-37); *PP* 1, pp. 89-90(105); *MSR* 3, p. 721(664). See *Prol.* p. 43, p. 75; *CPR*, A 380 p. 352, A 387 p. 356, A 496 p. 442, for passages in which Kant writes as if the thing-in-itself is the cause or ground of the phenomenal world.

² *WWR* 1, p. 4(31), p. 105(149), pp. 119-20(166), p. 125(172-73), p. 141(191), p. 153(204-5), p. 162(215), p. 502(613); *WWR* 2, p. 195(228).

³ See *WWR* 1, pp. 502-3(613-14). Janaway, *Self and World*, pp. 72-77, discusses a recent suggestion that Kant should also be read as holding that the distinction between appearances and thing-in-themselves is a distinction between two different aspects under which objects can be considered rather than a distinction between two kinds of objects. While Janaway acknowledges that there are numerous passages that support both views he thinks that the two-aspect view is inconsistent with Kant's idealism, and furthermore that it fails to remove the problem about things-in-themselves as causes.

⁴ *WWR* 1, p. 504(615). See also *WWR* 1, p. 162(215), p. 436(536), p. 503(614), p. 504(615); *WWR* 2, p. 600(703); *WN*, p. 216(202), p. 345(310); For less explicit references see *WWR* 2, p. 313(367), p. 364(433); *WWR* 1, p. 81(122), p. 112(156-57), p. 288(362), p. 290(365).

This claim would be inconceivable for Kant, given his theory of knowledge.¹ In bare outline this latter theory entails that the subject imposes spatial and temporal modes of organisation on the data supplied by the senses, and synthesises according to its a priori categories. In this way the subject is presented with, and acquires knowledge of, the spatio-temporal world of material objects. But this process can never yield knowledge of the thing-in-itself, since the latter is by definition that part of reality that is free of the mind-dependent principles of organisation that yield knowledge.² Thus for Kant introspection yields only awareness of temporal representations. While Schopenhauer's claim that in introspection we are also aware of the thing-in-itself is thus a radical departure from Kant's epistemology, it is important to note that this claim is made within the Kantian metaphysical framework of thing-in-itself and phenomena that he continues to endorse.

Kant's associated doctrine concerning a priori knowledge is also one that Schopenhauer wholeheartedly embraces. He is particularly impressed by Kant's proof of the ideality of space and time in the *Transcendental Aesthetic*.

The *Transcendental Aesthetic* is a work of such merit that it alone would be sufficient to immortalise the name of Kant. Its proofs have such a complete power of conviction that I number its propositions among the incontestable truths. They are also undoubtedly among those that are richest in results, and are therefore to be regarded as the rarest thing in the world, a real and great discovery in metaphysics. The fact, which he strictly demonstrates, that we are *a priori* conscious of a part of our knowledge, admits of no other explanation at all except that this constitutes the forms of our intellect; indeed this

¹ CPR, B50, p. 77; B67, p. 87.

² CPR, B45, pp. 73-74; A43, p. 83; B67, p. 87; A129, pp. 149-50.

is not so much an explanation as merely the distinct expression of the fact itself. For *a priori* means nothing but 'not gained on the path of experience, and hence not come into us from without.'¹

In addition to the *a priori* nature of space and time Schopenhauer also adopts Kant's doctrine on the *a priori* nature of our knowledge of causality. However, whereas for Kant the category of causality is one of the twelve *a priori* concepts through which an object is thought, complementing the intuition of that object through the senses,² Schopenhauer holds that our knowledge of causality is a pre-condition to such intuition, since it is the means by which perception of objects is possible at all. So while he agrees with Kant that our knowledge of causality is *a priori*, he disagrees with him that it functions as an *a priori* concept. Rather, it is the *a priori* form (or law) of the understanding whose function is to interpret sensations as effects in time and to posit a corresponding cause in space and time.³ Whereas for Kant *a priori* concepts enter into the perception of empirical reality, for Schopenhauer perception does not require concepts at all, and he severely criticises Kant for failing to distinguish clearly between knowledge through perception and abstract knowledge.⁴ Nevertheless, despite these important differences concerning the status of the notion of causality, Schopenhauer fully endorses the Kantian claim that our knowledge of empirical reality is conditioned by the *a priori* forms of the intellect and is therefore knowledge of mind-dependent representations rather than of reality as it is in itself. The importance of this doctrine is that it makes clear that for Schopenhauer knowledge of the thing-in-

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 437(537).

² *CPR*, B125, p. 126.

³ *WWR* 1, p. 13(40-41); *FFR*, p. 75(66).

⁴ *WWR* 1, p. 431(530), p. 448(549-50). However, Schopenhauer himself is unclear of the role of concepts, since he simultaneously treats them as abstracted particulars, existing privately in the mind, and also as abstracted universals, existing publicly in a world of communication and scientific enquiry. See White, *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root*, Chapter 7.

itself can never be attained through perception. Instead, another form of knowledge altogether is required. He makes clear this view in the following passage.

So far I agree with Kant. But now, as the counterpoise to this truth, I have stressed that other truth that we are not merely the *knowing subject*, but that we ourselves are also among those realities or entities we require to know, that *we ourselves are the thing-in-itself*. Consequently, a way *from within* stands open to us to that real inner nature of things to which we cannot penetrate *from without*. It is, so to speak, a subterranean passage, a secret alliance, which, as if by treachery, places us all at once in the fortress that could not be taken by attack from without. Precisely as such, the *thing-in-itself* can come into consciousness only quite directly, namely by *it itself being conscious of itself*; to try to know it objectively is to desire something contradictory. Everything objective is representation, consequently appearance, in fact mere phenomenon of the brain.¹

Schopenhauer also provides his own arguments based on physiology to support his thesis that perception is an intellectual process that affords us no knowledge of reality as it is in itself.² While I think that Schopenhauer's own arguments are more convincing than those of Kant, it is nevertheless clear that he believes that Kant's arguments for the ideality of space and time, and for the active role of the mind in ordering our experience of the world, independently establish that in perception we only encounter mind-dependent representations and not reality as it is in itself.

¹ *WWR* 2, p. 195(228). See also *WWR* 1, pp. 103-5(146-49), p. 420(517-18); *FFR*, pp. 119-20(99).

² See White, *On Schopenhauer's Fourfold Root*, pp. 45-49, and see Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 12.

This brings me to Kant's doctrine of concept-empiricism, and its relation to Schopenhauer's philosophy. According to Kant, a posteriori concepts only contribute to knowledge when they originate in perception, or empirical intuition. He states:

Our knowledge springs from two fundamental sources of the mind; the first is the capacity of receiving representations (receptivity for impressions), the second is the power of knowing an object through these representations (spontaneity [in the production] of concepts). Through the first an object is *given* to us, through the second the object is *thought* in relation to the [given] representation (which is a mere determination of the mind). Intuitions and concepts constitute, therefore, the elements of all our knowledge, so that neither concepts without an intuition in some way corresponding to them, nor intuition without concepts, can yield knowledge.¹

Schopenhauer rejects the second part of Kant's doctrine as expressed above, namely that 'intuition without concepts can yield no knowledge.' Instead he asserts that knowledge of the world, which we acquire in perception, is distinct from and infinitely superior to the abstract part of our knowledge that is expressed in concepts.² However, he accepts the first part of Kant's doctrine, namely that 'concepts without a corresponding intuition can yield no knowledge', and, he repeats this doctrine many times in his own works. For example:

¹ *CPR*, B 75/A 51-B 76/A 52, pp. 92-93. See also *CPR*, A 239/B 298, p. 259.

² *WWR* 1, p. 431(530).

Therefore the material of everything that occurs in our thinking must be capable of verification in our perception, as otherwise it would be an empty thinking.¹

Yet, despite Schopenhauer's endorsement of the doctrine of concept-empiricism, he nevertheless departs from it in his use of concepts to describe the thing-in-itself.² Since the latter is by definition *not* verifiable in perception, it seems that on Schopenhauer's Kantian theory of what can validly constitute knowledge, his claim that *the thing-in-itself is will*, that it is *one*, and that as such it has an essential nature of *endless striving*³ cannot be claims to knowledge. Yet Schopenhauer holds that in so identifying the nature of Kant's thing-in-itself he extends our knowledge of the nature of reality in a deeply significant way.

Such a discussion [of the irreducible nature of the universal forces of nature] would have been particularly favourable to Kant's excellent suggestion that a deeper knowledge of the inner being-in-itself, the phenomenon of which are the things in nature, would find in the mechanical (according to law) and in the apparently intentional working of nature one and the same ultimate principle that could serve as the common ground of explanation of them both. I hope I have given such a principle by establishing the will as the real thing-in-itself.⁴

¹ WWR 1, p. 475(582). See also WWR 1 p. 62(100), p. 65(104), p. 474(580); WWR 2, p. 71(86), p. 77(92-93), p. 192(224-25), p. 286(335-36).

² Schopenhauer also departs from the doctrine of concept-empiricism in his use of concepts such as 'the subject of knowing', 'pure matter' and 'causality'. However, I think that Schopenhauer would consider these to be a priori concepts, necessary to make sense of our experience of empirical reality. As such they are exempt from the demands of concept-empiricism, which only applies to a posteriori concepts.

³ WWR 1, pp. 146-47(197), p. 309(387), p. 379(469), p. 397(491).

⁴ WWR 1, p. 534(650). See also WWR 1, p. 502(612-13).

It might be objected that although Schopenhauer's use of concepts to describe the thing-in-itself is inconsistent with his doctrine of concept-empiricism, it is at least consistent with the more general assumption tacitly underlying that doctrine: namely that a posteriori concepts must correspond to an element of experience. Schopenhauer differs from Kant only in that he extends the content of possible experience to include the thing-in-itself. While this correctly describes Schopenhauer's practice (see Interpretations 1, 2, 3 and 5), the fact remains that it violates Kant's doctrine that our experience of reality is restricted to phenomena, and his related doctrine that all a posteriori concepts, if they are to constitute knowledge, must correspond to phenomenal objects of perception (see Interpretations 4 and 6). While Schopenhauer does not whole-heartedly endorse either doctrine, he nevertheless accepts the Kantian epistemology that generates the first doctrine, and he often makes clear that he endorses the second. Hence, inconsistency arises in his views because he attempts to graft his own original ideas onto the framework of Kantian doctrine, which he at least partly embraces.

3

This brings me to the third of Kant's contributions that Schopenhauer ascribes great merit to; namely, Kant's recognition that the moral significance of life concerns the thing-in-itself, and his associated doctrine regarding the distinction between the empirical and intelligible characters. Schopenhauer holds that the metaphysical explanation of morality is that in our essential nature we are one and the same will as thing-in-itself, and that moral feeling originates in an intuitive awareness of this essential unity.¹ For Kant, by contrast, morality is a matter of law, an expression of reason, which, being

¹ *BM*, p. 183(285), p. 209(310).

purely formal, is independent of feeling or sensory experience of the world.¹ Nevertheless, despite these differences Schopenhauer praises Kant for demonstrating 'the undeniable moral significance of human conduct to be quite different from, and not dependent on, the laws of the phenomenon'.² Schopenhauer holds that the intuitive awareness of our essential unity is the basis of sympathy or compassion for our fellow beings, and that it is compassion that is the basis of virtue.³ He defines the good person as one who sees less of a distinction than is usual between himself and others; and he maintains that for such a person 'the *principium individuationis*, the form of the phenomenon, no longer holds him so firmly in its grasp, but the suffering he sees in others touches him almost as much as does his own.' He goes on to assert that the good person immediately recognises 'that the in-itself of his own phenomenon is also that of others, namely the will-to-live which constitutes the inner nature of everything, and lives in all.'⁴ This knowledge results in a quieting of will, and Schopenhauer believes that the lives of saints and mystics are testament to the effects of such knowledge.⁵ The bad person on the other hand is one who does not see through the *principium individuationis* of the phenomenal world, and who therefore sees a wide gulf separating himself from all others, and who consequently wills vehemently.⁶ From this brief outline of Schopenhauer's moral theory it is clear that the Kantian assumptions of the existence of the thing-in-itself and its distinction from phenomena are among its essential elements, and thus provide a further reason why Schopenhauer endorses these assumptions, even though doing so creates difficulties for the consistency of his philosophy as a whole.

¹ See Höffding, *History of Modern Philosophy*, pp. 76-88.

² *WWR* 1, p. 422(519).

³ *WWR* 1, pp. 375-76(465-66), *WWR*, 2, p. 601-2(705), *BM*, p. 210(311).

⁴ *WWR* 1, p. 372(462).

⁵ *WWR* 1, p. 403(498).

⁶ *WWR* 1, pp. 362-63(451).

Regarding Kant's distinction between intelligible and empirical character Schopenhauer states that he numbers it 'among the most admirable things ever said by man.'¹ Kant writes of this distinction,

Every efficient cause must have a *character*, that is, a law of its causality, without which it would not be a cause. On the above supposition, we should, therefore, in a subject belonging to the sensible world have first an *empirical character*, whereby its actions, as appearances, stand in thoroughgoing connection with other appearances in accordance with unvarying laws of nature. And since these actions can be derived from the other appearances, they constitute together with them a single series in the order of nature. Secondly, we should also have to allow the subject an *intelligible character*, by which it is indeed the cause of those same actions [in their quality] as appearances, but which does not stand under any conditions of sensibility, and is not itself appearance. We can entitle the former the character of the thing in the [field of] appearance, and the latter its character as thing-in-itself.²

While Schopenhauer rejects Kant's account of a causal relation between the subject's intelligible and empirical characters, he agrees with Kant that the empirical character belongs to the sensible world of phenomena, and that the intelligible character refers to the thing-in-itself. He says of the intelligible character that it is the 'will as thing-in-itself, in so far as it appears in a definite individual in a definite degree'.³ And in his essay *On the Freedom of the Will* he notes, 'It is to the will in this capacity [i.e., as intelligible character] that

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 505(616).

² *CPR*, A539/B567, p. 468.

³ *WWR* 1, p. 289(364). However, as I mentioned previously and as I discuss more fully in Chapter 5, Schopenhauer is ambiguous in what he says about the relationship that exists between the thing-in-itself and intelligible characters.

freedom, and to be sure even absolute freedom, that is, independence of the law of causality (as a mere form of appearances), properly belongs.¹ It is clear from this that Schopenhauer's endorsement of the Kantian distinction between phenomenon and thing-in-itself plays a pivotal role in his philosophy, providing the metaphysical basis for the distinction between the empirical and intelligible characters, and thereby explaining our feelings of freedom and responsibility. It thus provides a further reason why Schopenhauer continues to endorse Kant's metaphysical framework even when its implications are inconsistent with his own developed doctrines.

4

This brings me to the last of what Schopenhauer takes to be Kant's most important contributions to philosophy, namely, the overthrow of scholastic philosophy. He believes that Kant, in demonstrating that all a priori knowledge arises from the forms of the intellect, effectively shows that the laws governing the world of experience cannot be used to explain that world. Scholastic philosophy made the error of assuming that such laws are absolute and eternal truths, and consequently its inferences about reality in itself are invalid. While Schopenhauer also claims knowledge of the thing-in-itself he is careful to avoid the error of scholasticism. Instead, he argues that our knowledge of the thing-in-itself is through direct experience, and hence is a posteriori. While, as I mentioned, this claim would be rejected by Kant, it is important to note that it nevertheless assumes Kant's metaphysical framework and accepts the Kantian conclusion that all a priori knowledge is of phenomena only.

¹ *FW*, p. 97(137).

In summary: Schopenhauer's claim that the thing-in-itself is will is predicated on the Kantian distinction between thing-in-itself and phenomena. However, in place of the causal relationship between thing-in-itself and phenomena which Schopenhauer believes that Kant surreptitiously adopts, he maintains that the two are related as different aspects of the one reality. This departure from Kantian metaphysics provides the ground for Schopenhauer's claim that in introspection we are directly aware of the other side of our being, the thing-in-itself, and that we find it to be will. However, it also gives rise to inconsistencies in Schopenhauer's epistemology. For on the one hand, he endorses the Kantian epistemology that generates the distinction between the thing-in-itself and phenomena in the first place, and on the other hand, he claims a direct awareness of the thing-in-itself, a claim that is inconsistent with that epistemology. Passages that support his Kantian epistemology provide the foundation for Interpretations 4 and 6, and passages that stress the availability of another form of awareness provide the foundation for Interpretations 1, 2, 3 and 5. Associated with his wavering support for Kantian epistemology are inconsistencies in Schopenhauer's views on concepts. On the one hand, he adopts the Kantian doctrine that all a posteriori concepts originate in perception, but on the other hand, he violates this doctrine by describing the thing-in-itself as 'will' and as an endless 'striving'. That he is aware of this inconsistency is suggested by passages in which he maintains that all language used to describe the thing-in-itself is metaphorical, and these passages provide the foundation for Interpretation 5.

Despite these difficulties Schopenhauer never abandons the Kantian assumption that reality comprises phenomena and thing-in-itself and that knowledge is restricted to mind-dependent representations. One reason for this is that he thinks Kant to be right in holding that the moral significance of life does not originate in the phenomenal world, but instead concerns the thing-in-itself. A second reason is that he believes that Kant's distinction between the

empirical and intelligible characters, which is predicated upon the distinction between phenomena and thing-in-itself, is of fundamental importance in explaining human freedom and responsibility. Finally, he believes that Kant, in demonstrating the error of scholastic philosophy, leaves the way open for Schopenhauer's own alternative method of coming to know the nature of reality in itself.

Having looked at the influence of Kant's teaching on Schopenhauer's philosophy, and examined the ways in which this influence prevented him from developing a self-consistent philosophy of his own, in Appendix 2, I turn to a consideration of the Platonic legacy.

APPENDIX 2: PLATO

Plato's influence on Schopenhauer shows itself most obviously in the latter's adoption of a two-tiered view of reality. However, his influence goes much further; for in Schopenhauer's doctrine of the Platonic Ideas, it permeates the detail of his metaphysical and aesthetic doctrines. In my discussion of the nature and extent of Plato's influence I therefore focus upon the role of the Ideas in both these doctrines. I begin by looking at the way in which Schopenhauer characterises the Ideas, then consider their roles in his metaphysical and aesthetic doctrines, and lastly look at difficulties facing his views on the nature and roles of the Ideas.

1

Schopenhauer says of the Platonic Ideas that they are 'the immediate and therefore adequate objectivity of the thing-in-itself, which itself however is the *will*—the will in so far as it is not yet objectified, has not yet become representation.'¹ In specifying the difference between the Ideas and the thing-in-itself he goes on to assert:

On the other hand, the Platonic Idea is necessarily object, something known, a representation, and precisely, but only, in this respect is it — different from the thing-in-itself.²

And on the relationship between the Ideas and the many individual representations that comprise the phenomenal world he states:

The particular thing, appearing in accordance with the principle of sufficient reason, is therefore only an indirect objectification of the

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 174(227).

² *WWR* 1, p. 175(228).

thing-in-itself (which is the will). Between it and the thing-in-itself the Idea still stands as the only objectivity of the will, since it has not assumed any other form peculiar to knowledge as such, except that of the representation in general, i. e., that of being object for a subject.¹

From these passages it is clear that for Schopenhauer the Platonic Ideas are objectifications of will and that they occupy a position intermediate between the thing-in-itself and the phenomenal world. However, what is not immediately clear is the status of this intermediate position, and the role which the Ideas play in virtue of it.² To understand these points better we need to look at the features of the Platonic doctrine of Ideas that Schopenhauer draws upon in his attempt to integrate that doctrine into his own philosophy.

In comparing the Platonic doctrine with Kant's doctrine on the thing-in-itself Schopenhauer asserts:

It is obvious, and needs no further demonstration, that the inner meaning of both doctrines is wholly the same; that both declare the visible world to be a phenomenon which in itself is void and empty, and which has meaning and borrowed reality only through the thing that expresses itself in it (the thing-in-itself in the one case, the Idea in the other).³

And of the Platonic Ideas he states that according to Plato:

Only the real archetypes of those shadowy outlines, the eternal Ideas, the original forms of all things, can be described as truly existing,

¹ Ibid.

² See Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, p. 81, who says that 'the Ideas are a medium between the transcendental will and empirical objects, a third kingdom that Schopenhauer, whose strength unfortunately is not epistemological clarity, does not define in terms of its degree of reality.'

³ *WWR* 1, p. 171-72(224).

since they always are but never become and never pass away. No plurality belongs to them; for each by its nature is only one, since it is the archetype itself, of which all the particular, transitory things of the same kind and name are copies or shadows.¹

From these passages it is plain that for Schopenhauer the essence of the Platonic doctrine is that the Ideas are 'real archetypes' or 'universals' which contrast with the fleeting and dependent world of particulars that are their copies.² This is an important point since it makes clear that the central significance of the Ideas for Schopenhauer concerns their relationship with the phenomenal world rather than their relationship with the thing-in-itself. Nevertheless, to understand that significance we must first look more closely at their relationship with the thing-in-itself.

David Hamlyn thinks that Schopenhauer is less concerned with the ontological status of the Ideas than with their logical status as representations, and he argues that Schopenhauer introduces the Ideas as a way of explaining how the undifferentiated will as thing-in-itself can be objectified in a plurality of things and still be will. For in its objectification the will is not divided among phenomena: it exists entire and undivided in each.³ Schopenhauer states:

Therefore, it [the Idea] alone is the most adequate objectivity possible of the will or of the thing-in-itself; *indeed it is even the whole thing-in-itself, only under the form of the representation.*⁴

¹ WWR 1, p. 171(223-24).

² For Plato the Ideas play the part of both universals and perfect particulars. However, Schopenhauer appeals only to their role as universals.

³ Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer*, pp. 104-5.

⁴ WWR 1, p. 175(228) (italics mine).

Each Platonic Idea is thus a complete expression of the one will. However, if this is so, the question arises as to what makes the different Ideas distinct; for according to Schopenhauer there are many Ideas. It cannot be space and time that distinguish them from one another since he asserts that they are neither spatial nor temporal.¹ His answer is that the Ideas are distinguished by the fact that they are different grades of the will's objectification.²

However, this answer immediately raises a further question: what makes one grade higher than another? Terri Graves Taylor argues that there are two answers.³ The first is that Schopenhauer appeals to an 'ontological' distinction according to which the higher grades of the Ideas are objectively better or more faithful representations of the will than the lower grades.⁴ That is, while each Idea is as fully will as the next, the higher grades express the will more truly. Taylor uses the analogy of human action to advantage here. While none of my actions is more fully mine than others, nonetheless some are more significant in that they better reveal my character. However, against this answer to the question about what distinguishes the Ideas, there is a strong objection. If the highest grade of objectification of the will is that which most truly reveals the nature of the will, then surely it is the forces of nature that should claim this title. By contrast, the Idea of man, since it manifests itself in individuals capable of intentional action, should be ranked as a low grade of the will's objectification. Yet Schopenhauer's rating is the exact opposite: he insists that

1 WWR 1, p. 129(177).

2 WWR 1, p. 128(175-76).

3 Terri Graves Taylor, 'Platonic Ideas, Aesthetic Experience, and the Resolution of Schopenhauer's "Great Contradiction"', *International Studies in Philosophy* 19, 3 (1987), p. 46. Since Taylor refers to the Haldane and Kemp translation of Schopenhauer's main work I note these references in addition to the corresponding passages in Payne's translation when discussing Taylor's paper.

4 I have reservations about Taylor's choice of terminology since it not clear to me that the distinction between representations and that which they represent is an 'ontological' one, even though the distinction has ontological implications. However, for the purposes of developing the argument, I shall continue to use Taylor's terminology.

it is the Idea of man that expresses the highest grade of objectification of will,¹ while he says of the forces of nature that they express its lowest grade objectification.² Given this objection, it seems implausible to hold that the distinction between the different grades of objectification of will is ontological.³

The second answer, according to Taylor, is that the distinction is epistemological. He argues that in this case it is not that the higher grades are better or more faithful expressions of will, but rather that they are more easily recognisable as being expressions of will. In other words, in the higher grades, will is more transparently objectified for the knowing subject. For example, the will is as much in a rock as in a human being; however, because of our experience of willing we, as knowing subjects, can more easily identify the inner nature of humans as will than we can the inner nature of a rock. The inner nature of inanimate matter such as rocks is obscure and we can only come to recognise it as will by analogy with ourselves; that is, we recognise that just as human behaviour is the outcome of external causes acting upon our character, which we identify as will, so we reason that changes in lifeless bodies occur as the outcome of external causes acting upon the inner nature of such bodies, which must also be will.⁴

Hence the hierarchical ordering of the ideas can be understood in the following two interrelated ways: first, according to the degree to which the will as manifested in a particular idea is aware of itself as will; second, according to the degree to which the will as manifested in a particular idea is able to recognise the will in other things. In accordance with these two criteria,

¹ *WWR I*, pp. 221(281).

² *WWR I*, p. 214(273).

³ Taylor, 'Great Contradiction', p. 46.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47. Taylor refers to *WWI I*, p. 163(172).

human beings are the highest grade of objectification. For the self-consciousness that goes with intelligence enables us to recognise that our inner nature is will, and by analogy we come to recognise that the inner nature of other things is also will.

Taylor's analysis seems both persuasive and correct. Further support for the epistemological basis of the hierarchy of grades is evident in the following passage in which Schopenhauer asserts that the higher grade is the more *distinct objectification* of the will.

The more perfect Idea, resulting from such a victory over several lower Ideas or objectifications of the will, gains an entirely new character just by taking into itself from each of the subdued Ideas an analogue of higher power. *The will is objectified in a new and more distinct way.*¹

The importance of establishing that the Ideas are distinguished according to epistemological criteria is that it enables Taylor to show that, contrary to the opinion of several commentators, Schopenhauer's account of aesthetic experience is not flawed by contradiction in the way that they suggest.² The contradiction that they refer to is this. According to Schopenhauer's principles, the will is the only thing that ever acts and is never acted upon. Yet he maintains that in aesthetic consciousness we can gain temporary release from suffering by freeing ourselves from the bondage of the will. But for this to occur the intellect would have to overcome the will, and on Schopenhauer's principles this is impossible. Hamlyn notes that the contradiction is even more

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 145(195), (italics mine) (or see *WWI* 1, p. 189). See also *MSR* 1, p. 185(169-70).

² See Richard Taylor, 'Schopenhauer' in *A Critical History of Western Philosophy*, ed. D. J. O'Connor (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), p. 379; Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer*, p. 110.

acute in the case of contemplative consciousness, for here Schopenhauer asserts that permanent release from suffering is possible with complete denial of the will. In Taylor's discussion of the apparent contradiction, he focuses exclusively on its relevance to aesthetic consciousness. However, following Hamlyn's reasoning, since the same problem confronts both aesthetic and contemplative consciousness, a solution to the first is also relevant to the second. Since denial of the will is central to Schopenhauer's philosophy it is worthwhile considering whether his doctrine on the Platonic Ideas can shed light on how denial of the will might occur.

2

To return to Taylor's argument. Having argued that the distinction between the grades of objectification of the will is epistemological, Taylor considers the relationship between particular things and the Ideas. He notes Schopenhauer's claim that although in principle each Idea could have an infinite number of copies or representations, in actuality the number is limited; for the amount of matter in which the Ideas can manifest themselves in particular things is finite¹ (*Diese Norm bezieht sich daher nothwendig auf die Identität der gesamten vorhandenen Materie, welche das gemeinsame Substrat aller jener verschiedenen Erscheinungen ist*). Schopenhauer asserts that the Ideas fight for the available matter, with the resulting strife itself being 'that variance with itself essential to the will'.² And because matter changes its form, there must be a rule that governs the instantiation of Form (or Idea) in matter; for otherwise, once an Idea gained possession of matter, it would never relinquish it.³ He asserts that this rule is the law of causality, which operates to ensure

¹ WWR 1, p. 134-35(183).

² WWR 1, pp. 146-47(198) (or see WWI 1, p. 192).

³ WWR 1, p. 135(183) (or see WWI 1, p. 175).

that in the event of two Ideas fighting for the same bit of matter, the matter goes to the one that allows the greater manifestation of will.¹

Through time and space the Idea multiplies itself into innumerable phenomena, but the order in which these enter into those forms of multiplicity is definitely determined by the law of causality. This law is, so to speak, the norm of the extreme points of those phenomena of different Ideas, according to which space, time and matter are assigned to them.²

In other words, it is under the guidance of the law of causality that the will as thing-in-itself objectifies itself in ever higher grades of objectification in the phenomenal world.³

The next step in the argument looks at the way in which the higher grades manifest themselves. According to Schopenhauer, the human species is the highest grade of objectification of the will, and each individual is a separate grade or Idea. In most of us for most of the time, our intellect is subordinated to our individual will, with the result that we perceive only what pertains to the interests of that will. However, in aesthetic contemplation, as the spontaneous result of receiving strong perceptual stimulus, our intellect temporally frees itself from the subjugation of the individual will. We then become the pure subject of knowledge contemplating the Platonic Forms or Ideas. And being free from the demands of our will, we enjoy both the pleasure induced by the perception of the Ideas and the inner peace that accompanies release from

1 Taylor makes the important point that for Schopenhauer matter is just the objectification of causality. The law of causality is immanent in the world because it 'belongs to the mere form of our understanding, like the whole of the objective world (*WWR* 2, p. 43(56) (or see *WWI* 2, p. 216). He adds that 'we call it the law of causality when we consider the world as Will's objectification and call it the form of causality when we speak of the world as our representation (Taylor, 'Great Contradiction', p. 47).

2 *WWR* 1, p. 134(183) (or see *WWI*, p. 175).

3 Taylor, 'Great Contradiction', p. 48.

willing. For most of us this is only a temporary state, but for the genius it can be prolonged sufficiently to enable him or her to produce a work that communicates his vision of the Platonic Forms or Ideas. The work of the true artist, poet, or philosopher is the product of such experiences.¹

Taylor argues that genius, while exceptional in this world, should nevertheless be regarded as the natural next step in the evolution of the objectification of the Ideas. Those with the capacity for aesthetic experience, be it fleeting or extended, are manifestations of higher grades of will. For their intellect, in being temporarily freed from their will, is more conscious of the inner nature both of the world and of themselves. Furthermore, the genius recognises the inner nature of the world not merely by analogy with her own inner nature, but by direct awareness of the Platonic Ideas, which are the most immediate objectification of the will as thing-in-itself.² Hence, both aesthetic consciousness and the phenomenon of genius are not contrary to the rest of Schopenhauer's philosophy, but instead are natural consequences of it.³

With this understanding of Schopenhauer, Taylor re-examines the alleged contradiction referred to earlier—that according to Schopenhauer's principles, the will is the only thing that ever acts and is never acted upon, yet his account of aesthetic consciousness demands that the intellect overcomes the will. He asserts that this apparent contradiction in Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory arises first: because critics assume that it is the individual rather than the law of causality that liberates the intellect from its will; second, because they fail to make the necessary distinction between individual wills and the will qua thing-in-itself. It is not the individual will that somehow allows the intellect to free

¹ Ibid., p. 49.

² *WWR* 2, p. 382(452) (or see *WWI* 3, pp. 146–47); *WWR* 1, pp. 178–81(479–84) (or see *WWI* 1, pp. 230–34).

³ Taylor, 'Great Contradiction', p. 49.

itself from that will's demands: rather, it is the action of the will as thing-in-itself, striving for higher and higher grades of objectification under the aegis of the law of causality, that accounts for the possibility of the temporary subordination of the individual will. Taylor concludes that this fresh examination of the role of the Platonic Ideas shows that Schopenhauer is vindicated. The charge of inconsistency brought against him by the standard interpretation of his aesthetic theory rests on a misunderstanding of his metaphysics.¹

Taylor's conclusion that the distinction between the different grades of objectification of the will is epistemological appears to be sound, as does his subsequent analysis of Schopenhauer's doctrines on aesthetics and genius. I now propose to look at the relevance of this to Schopenhauer's doctrine of denial of the will.

At the end of his paper, Taylor raises the question whether, on his interpretation, Schopenhauer is really a pessimist. Although the will as thing-in-itself has no conscious purpose, it seeks ever higher manifestations in its phenomenal representations. Does not this fact suggest that even though our individual lives might be miserable, we are nevertheless striving for a higher good? Taylor thinks not. For despite the fact that the will is seeking ever higher manifestations, it is none the less always striving. Further, any victory that the intellect may have over the individual will is always temporary: even the genius cannot forever avoid the relentless demands of the will, and so there is no ultimate escape from its domination.² However, on this point I disagree with Taylor. While it is true that the genius can never completely escape the

¹ Ibid., p. 50.

² Ibid. The related view that the will's objectification in ever-higher grades is without end is held by Lovejoy, 'Schopenhauer as an Evolutionist', pp. 216-19. However, I hold that this view is mistaken on the grounds that there is a 'highest' grade; it occurs in the character of saints.

tyranny of the will, Schopenhauer allows that such a total escape *is* possible in the case of those who deny the will, and as examples he cites ascetics, saints, and those whose will has been mortified through the experience of immense suffering. In them, there remains only the thin thread of willing that keeps them from starvation, and in some cases even this thread is severed.¹ Such individuals, according to Schopenhauer, see through the *principium individuationis* of phenomenal reality and become obscurely aware, in an intuitive, immediate way, that all beings in their essential nature are one and the same striving will. Such knowledge promotes feelings of sympathy and compassion for others and a loss of interest in one's own egoistic concerns. While this knowledge may also be a source of profound pessimism, Schopenhauer thinks that it is the precursor to an escape from the will, and hence an escape from pessimism.

Now it might be thought that, on Schopenhauer's theory of will, individuals who deny the will must be considered unaccountable deviants. For in them, the individual will, which constitutes their essence, no longer dominates their actions. However, if we return to Taylor's claim that the higher grades of objectification warrant their position because in them the will as thing-in-itself is more conscious of itself as will, and because they are more easily able to recognise the inner nature of other phenomena as will, then saints and ascetics, far from being deviants, constitute the highest possible grade of the will's manifestation. While genius may be that grade of the will's manifestation that most easily allows the recognition of the will through perceptual means, the saint's recognition of the will in all beings is non-perceptual and therefore free of the subject-object form of all perception. While the genius is conscious only of the 'most adequate objectivity of the will'—the Platonic Idea—the saint is

¹ WWR 1, p. 390(483).

conscious of the will in itself in all beings. In the following passage, Schopenhauer distinguishes the saint from the genius, and makes clear that it is the former who has the greater knowledge of the inner nature of reality.

For just as torches and fireworks become pale and insignificant in the presence of the sun, so the intellect, even genius, and beauty likewise, are outshone and eclipsed by goodness of heart . . . For goodness of heart is a transcendent quality; it belongs to an order of things reaching beyond this life, and is incommensurable with any other perfection. Where it is present in a high degree, it makes the heart so large that this embraces the world, so that everything now lies within it, no longer outside. For goodness of heart identifies all beings with its own nature.¹

The inferior awareness of the genius compared to that of the saintly person is also suggested by other things that Schopenhauer says. Concerning genius he asserts that 'it is conditioned by a passionate temperament'² and that 'the greatest mental abilities are found only with a vehement and passionate will.'³ As he elsewhere indicates that goodness of heart requires that a person turn away from his own will,⁴ it seems that in his view the genius is unlikely to experience the higher form of awareness experienced by the saint. That Schopenhauer sees no necessary connection between saintliness and genius is clear from his assertion that:

A saint may be full of the most absurd superstition, or, on the other hand, may be a philosopher; it is all the same. His conduct alone is evidence that he is a saint; for, in a moral regard, it springs not from

¹ WWR 2, p. 232(271).

² WWR 2, p. 282(330).

³ WWR 2, p. 203(236).

⁴ WWR 1, pp. 378-80(468-71).

abstract knowledge, but from intuitively apprehended, immediate knowledge of the world and of its inner nature, and is expressed by him through some dogma only for the satisfaction of his faculty of reason. It is therefore just as little necessary for the saint to be a philosopher as for the philosopher to be a saint.¹

Finally, in the following passages Schopenhauer at least suggests that the saint is the highest objectification of the will.

Humanity is the only stage at which the will can deny itself, and completely turn away from life. To the will that does not deny itself, every birth imparts a new and different intellect; until it has recognised the true nature of life, and, in consequence, no longer wills it.²

With me, on the other hand, the will arrives at self-knowledge through its objectification, however this may come about, whereby its abolition, conversion, and salvation become possible.³

Taylor's epistemological criteria for grading the Ideas thus allows us to draw the conclusion that it is not just aesthetic states and genius that arise naturally from the metaphysics of will described by Schopenhauer, but also the characters of ascetic and saintly individuals. While such individuals may be exceptional in a world dominated by will, this does not mean that their presence is inexplicable. They have characters that are the highest grade of the will's objectification; for in them, the will as thing-in-itself becomes fully conscious of itself as will, and they are able to recognise the inner nature of all other beings as will. However, Schopenhauer makes clear that this intuitive

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 383(474).

² *WWR* 2, p. 637(747). See also *WWR* 2, p. 610(714); *WWR* 1, p. 155(208).

³ *WWR* 2, p. 643(754).

awareness of the will as thing-in-itself in all beings is just the precursor to mystical awareness.¹ This comes about with the annihilation of all willing, and when this occurs the mystic is aware not of the will, but of those other aspects of the thing-in-itself discussed in Interpretation 3. Thus, for the 'favoured few' there is an escape from the will, and pessimism is defeated.²

To summarise: Schopenhauer distinguishes one Idea from another by the fact that they are different grades of the will's objectification. In relation to what makes one grade higher than another, I discussed Taylor's answer. His analysis shows that the distinction between the different Platonic Ideas is epistemological. The higher Ideas are those in which the will as thing-in-itself is more easily able to recognise itself as will, and the knowing subject is more easily able to recognise the inner nature of other phenomena as will. In aesthetic experience and in genius, these two conditions are most fully met as far as perceptual knowledge is concerned: the will as thing-in-itself, striving for ever higher grades of manifestation guided by the law of causality, makes possible aesthetic experience and genius. Furthermore, contrary to the views of some commentators, these are the natural outcome of the state of affairs described by Schopenhauer's metaphysics of will rather than evidence of an inconsistency in it.

Taylor believes that despite his view concerning the natural tendency of the will as thing-in-itself to objectify itself in higher grades of objectification,

¹ Schopenhauer says that in these exceptional cases in which knowledge of the inner nature of the world leads to denial of the will, freedom appears in the phenomenon (see *WWR* 1, p. 288(362), p. 395(488)). While this comment might suggest that saintliness is the outcome of particular circumstances rather than of innate character I do not think that this is Schopenhauer's meaning. Instead I think that he means that the saintly character arises from the activity of the will striving for ever higher grades of objectification under the guidance of the law of causality, and that in such characters, denial of the will, with the attendant appearance of freedom, is possible.

² Cartwright, however, contends that Schopenhauer's philosophy is 'still extremely pessimistic', as 'the majority of human beings just do not have the right sort of constitution to make this venture' (See David E. Cartwright, 'Schopenhauerian Optimism and an Alternative to Resignation?', *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch* 66 (1985), pp. 157-58).

Schopenhauer's philosophy is still essentially pessimistic. This is because aesthetic experience and genius offer only a temporary release from willing. However, on this last point I disagree with Taylor, since he fails to consider Schopenhauer's doctrine of denial of the will. Using Taylor's epistemological criteria for differentiating the grades of the will, I argue that saints, or those who deny the will, have characters that are even higher grades of the will's objectification than those possessed by genius. Whereas genius recognises the will under the quasi-representational form of the Platonic Idea, the saint's awareness of the will in all beings is non-perceptual and therefore free of the subject-object form of representation. This recognition is the precursor to complete denial of the will and to mysticism. The mystic is no longer aware of the will, but instead is aware of those other aspects of the thing-in-itself discussed in Interpretation 3. Hence, in the end, Schopenhauer's philosophy is not entirely pessimistic.

3

While Taylor's analysis of Schopenhauer's doctrine of the Platonic Ideas shows how the apparent contradiction of the intellect's overcoming the will can be resolved, there remain several other *prima facie* difficulties with Schopenhauer's doctrine. First, as several commentators point out, it seems paradoxical to assert that aesthetic experience is a release from the bondage of the will given that the objects of aesthetic awareness, the Platonic Ideas, are themselves the objectification of will.¹ In an effort to resolve this paradox, Arthur Hübscher contends that because the pure subject of knowledge becomes completely detached from the will and its purpose, the will-less contemplation is unaffected by the unhappy character of the objectification of the will. He

¹ Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer*, p. 110; Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, pp. 95-97; William Desmond, 'Schopenhauer, Art, and the Dark Origin', in *Schopenhauer*, ed. von der Luft, pp. 115-18.

asserts that in the case of music, although this offers the most universal and complete picture of reality, it is far removed from this reality itself. It expresses the meaning and the form of the state of being without actually being that state itself and consequently it is removed from the latter's torment.¹

While Hübscher's suggestion sheds light on the subject's lack of awareness of the will, it is not sufficient to resolve the paradox. Schopenhauer maintains that the enjoyment of aesthetic experience derives from both the subject's release from the demands of his will and from the pleasure induced by the perception of the Ideas.² Of the latter, he holds that the higher the grade of Idea the greater the aesthetic enjoyment. This is so because the higher grades are the most distinct revelations of the will. He states that 'these exhibit the greatest variety of forms, a wealth and deep significance of phenomena; they reveal to us most completely the essence of the will, whether in its violence, its terribleness, its satisfaction, or its being broken (this last in tragic situations), finally even in its change or self-surrender.'³ While it is clear that the reason that the terribleness of the will does not excite terror is that the pure subject of knowledge no longer sees the object of awareness in relation to his or her own will, it still seems paradoxical to assert that aesthetic enjoyment at least partly derives from an awareness of the will, the source of suffering and misery in the world. A further point is that this paradox is absent in the case of Plato's own doctrine, since the nature of the Ideas or Forms is said to be of positive value.

A second paradox in Schopenhauer's aesthetic doctrine is discussed by George Simmel. He notes that according to Schopenhauer art reveals life to us, yet it is free of the willing that constitutes life. Simmel asserts that this

¹ Hübscher, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer in its Intellectual Context*, p. 286.

² *WWR* 1, p. 212(271-72).

³ *WWR* 1, pp. 212-13(272).

contradiction in Schopenhauer's aesthetic doctrine, though not resolved or resolvable, mirrors the contradiction in art itself. For in art, states Simmel, we know reality by seeing it fade before our eyes. He concludes that although it may not have been intentional, Schopenhauer's theory, by showing us the problems inherent in art, enables us to see that these problems are insoluble.¹

This leads me to a point raised by Julian Young. He holds that Schopenhauer calls the Ideas Platonic because he wishes to stress that they are universals and that, contrary to Plato's view, art is of value precisely because of its expression of the universal.² Young highlights what is arguably the most important of Schopenhauer's motivations for introducing the Platonic Ideas; namely, to provide an explanation for aesthetic experience. That Schopenhauer has a highly developed aesthetic sense seems beyond doubt, given both his extensive and often passionate writings on all forms of artistic expression and his lifelong interest in the theatre and the arts generally. Given this character trait, it seems likely that it is a matter of priority to him that his metaphysics be able to accommodate an explanation of aesthetic experience. In introducing the Platonic Ideas, he provides such an explanation, and moreover it is an explanation that has at various times been endorsed by others.³ But, having introduced the Ideas for the purposes of his aesthetic theory, Schopenhauer is then faced with the task of integrating them into his general metaphysics of will. The paradoxes mentioned above, as well as other problems that I shall come to, arise because of the difficulties of this task. In

¹ Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, pp. 102-4.

² Julian Young, 'The Standpoint of Eternity: Schopenhauer on Art', *Kant-Studien* 78 (1987), p. 436.

³ See William K. Wimsatt Jr. & Cleanth Brooks, *Literary Criticism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957). References to both critics and artists who hold that the function of art is the expression of the universal include the following: pp. 80-82 regarding Horace and Cicero; pp. 113-15 regarding Plotinus; pp. 316-17 regarding Samuel Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Pope, Dryden, and A. O. Lovejoy; p. 368 regarding Goethe; and p. 742 regarding Schelling and Coleridge.

support of the view that the Platonic Ideas are introduced primarily to explain aesthetic experience I present the following considerations.

The Platonic Ideas play a crucial role in explaining how aesthetic consciousness, genius, saints and mystics occur. However, it is difficult to see why, in virtue of this role, the Ideas should be called Platonic. In both Platonic doctrine and Schopenhauer's philosophy the Ideas are the objects of a superior form of awareness of reality. For Plato, such awareness brings a release from the restless longing of eros;¹ for Schopenhauer, it brings a release from the will. However, here the similarities end: for, the respective mechanisms by which release is achieved differ. For Schopenhauer, release is achieved by the will that is thing-in-itself striving for ever higher grades of objectification under the guidance of the law of causality. For Plato, in the *Republic*, it is achieved by the personal effort and discipline of the few who are both sufficiently gifted and willing to devote their lives to the quest.² Furthermore, the grading of the Ideas in Schopenhauer's metaphysics, finds no parallel in Platonic doctrine. Indeed, Plato's stories of the Cave and the Line in the *Republic* suggest the opposite grading, since the highest Form, the Form of the Good, is the most difficult to know.³ For these reasons it is unlikely that Schopenhauer's reference to Plato is based upon any resemblance that he sees between himself and Plato regarding either the way in which the apprehension of the Ideas is achieved or the grading of the Ideas. Instead, Young appears right in claiming that the reference to Plato originates in the similarity that Schopenhauer sees between Plato's doctrine of the Forms viewed as universals instantiated in particular things, and his own explanation

¹ See Desmond, 'Schopenhauer, Art and the Dark Origin', pp. 115-16.

² In the *Meno* (81-87b) Plato suggests that knowledge of eternal truths is already latent even in an uneducated slave, since knowledge is a form of remembering. However, the dialogue also suggests that at least some form of guidance and effort is required in order that this knowledge become actual.

³ See *Republic* X.

of the nature of aesthetic experience. Hence, while the role that the Platonic Ideas play in other aspects of Schopenhauer's metaphysics is clearly important, it has little to do with the original Platonic doctrine. This view supports the claim that the Ideas are introduced primarily to explain aesthetic experience, and that it is therefore here that the influence of Plato is to be found.

Further evidence for this view is also at least suggested by the manner in which Schopenhauer introduces the Ideas in the text of *The World as Will and Representation*. They are first discussed in the second book of the first volume and are used to explain all of the following: the characteristic similarities between members of a species; the increasing presence of individuality in the higher species;¹ the irreducibility of the fundamental forces to each other;² the way in which higher species arise;³ and the fundamental interconnectedness of all of nature's productions.⁴ However, Schopenhauer's prefaces these explanations with the comment:

Accordingly, what follows, and this has already impressed itself as a matter of course on every student of Plato, *will be in the next book the subject of detailed discussion*. Those different grades of the will's objectification, expressed in innumerable individuals, exist as the unattained patterns of these, or as the eternal forms of things.⁵

Since the 'next book' that Schopenhauer refers to is devoted to a discussion of aesthetic experience, the above passage suggests that the primary and original role of the Ideas is that of universals as the objects of aesthetic awareness. Furthermore, it suggests that Schopenhauer justifies his decision to call the

¹ *WWR* 1, pp. 132-33(180-81).

² *WWR* 1, pp. 142-43(192-93).

³ *WWR* 1, pp. 144-45(195).

⁴ *WWR* 1, pp. 153-55(204-7).

⁵ *WWR* 1, p. 129(177) (*italics mine*).

Ideas 'Platonic' by appealing to their role as universals instantiated in particular things.

In the light of the above discussion concerning Schopenhauer's primary motivation for introducing the Ideas, I propose to consider briefly some further difficulties that commentators raise in relation to his doctrine of the Platonic Ideas. These difficulties focus on the differences between the original Platonic doctrine and Schopenhauer's use of it for his own purposes. It is worth while outlining these difficulties because many argue that the differences are so substantial that they seriously undermine Schopenhauer's attempt to connect the two doctrines.

The first two notable differences between the doctrines concern the ontological status of the Ideas. First, according to Plato, the Forms or Ideas occupy a supra-sensible realm, whereas for Schopenhauer, the Ideas are Representations, albeit of a special kind. Second, for Plato the Forms constitute ultimate reality, whereas for Schopenhauer, it is the thing-in-itself rather than the Ideas that merit this title.¹ A further difference follows from these ontological differences. For Plato, since the Forms do not exist in the sensible realm, they cannot be apprehended by a process of abstraction from that realm. However, according to Schopenhauer, one apprehends the Ideas precisely by such a process; for in aesthetic awareness, the subject attends only to the essential features of the particular object. The next difference concerns the way in which we supposedly have knowledge of the Ideas. For Plato, it is the 'mind's eye' that grasps the Forms, whereas for Schopenhauer, the Ideas are apprehended through sense perception.² The fifth difference is

¹ See Copleston, *Arthur Schopenhauer*, p. 105; Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, p. 239.

² See Janaway, *Self and World*, p. 9, p. 277.

However, it should be noted that for Plato the forms also function as explanations for the nature of our sensory experience.

one that has already been mentioned; whereas for Plato, the nature of the Forms is such that they are of high value, for Schopenhauer, the nature of the Ideas is the will.¹ While it could be argued that it is only when the will is manifested in phenomena that it brings suffering and misery, it still seems paradoxical that the apprehension of the will-in-itself could be a valued experience. For Schopenhauer himself only ever describes the will in pejorative terms. The sixth difference has also been previously alluded to. It is that whereas for Schopenhauer art is of enormous value because it presents a vision of the Ideas, in Plato's *Republic*, art is fraudulent because it is concerned only with copies of particular things and is therefore twice removed from the apprehension of the Forms.² A final difference is that whereas for Plato, the apprehension of the Ideas is generally an unqualified good for the individual, Schopenhauer believes that the genius, the person who most clearly apprehends the Ideas, will often be miserable and is usually a failure in his or her everyday life.³

These significant differences between the original Platonic doctrine, as expressed in at least some of the dialogues, and Schopenhauer's Platonic Ideas suggest that his appeal to the Platonic doctrine in order to explain the apprehension of the universal in aesthetic experience is not well founded. It is therefore not without justification that many commentators consider Schopenhauer's adoption of the Platonic terminology to be little more than an unwarranted gloss on his own doctrines. Nevertheless, the above discussion of the role of the Ideas in Schopenhauer's aesthetics and metaphysics illustrates

¹ See Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer*, p. 110; Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, pp. 95-97; Desmond, 'Schopenhauer, Art and the Dark Origin', pp. 115-18.

² See Hilde Hein, 'Schopenhauer and Platonic Ideas', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 4 (1966), p. 134; Young, 'The Standpoint of Eternity', p. 436. However, it should also be noted that in the *Symposium*, Plato expresses a favourable attitude to artists. Diotima says of the 'masters of arts' that they are all 'poets and creators' (205 b, c).

³ Hein, 'Schopenhauer and Platonic Ideas', p. 142, and see *Republic* X.

that whatever the justification of his appeal to Platonic terminology, the importance of the Ideas in providing explanations for key aspects of his philosophy makes the influence of Plato, whose Ideas he sees as the foundation of his own account of aesthetic experience, a significant one in the development and understanding of his system as a whole.

In summary: The role of the Platonic Ideas in Schopenhauer's philosophy is that of universals whose primary function is to explain aesthetic experience, and whose function in Schopenhauer's metaphysics is of secondary importance. He distinguishes the Ideas in terms of their respective levels of objectification of the will. Schopenhauer employs the following epistemological criteria to determine levels of objectification of the Ideas: first, the degree to which the will, as manifested in the particular Idea, is aware of itself as will; second, the degree to which the will, as manifested in the particular Idea, is able to recognise the will in other things.

Employing these criteria, it is possible to understand how both aesthetic experience and denial of the will occur. For the will as thing-in-itself objectifies itself in ever higher Ideas under the guidance of the law of causality. Consequently, genius and saintliness are natural steps in the evolution of the objectification of the Ideas. For they represent the highest grades of the will's objectification in that they satisfy criteria a) and b) above most completely. Furthermore, since denial of the will brings release from the suffering that is inherent in the will's affirmation, Schopenhauer's metaphysics of will in the end is optimistic rather than pessimistic. Finally, Schopenhauer's use of Platonic terminology in describing the Ideas is only justified on the grounds that for both Plato and Schopenhauer the Ideas are universals. In other respects there is little resemblance between their respective conceptions of them.

While the discussion of the influence of Plato on Schopenhauer's philosophy does not directly bear on the latter's claim that the thing-in-itself is will, it does shed light on the difficulty of understanding how denial of the will occurs. Since denial of the will is of central importance to Schopenhauer it is noteworthy that its explanation appeals to the philosophy of Plato, one of the three main influences on his thinking.

APPENDIX 3: EASTERN THOUGHT

Schopenhauer's introduction to the ideas of the Hindus and to Eastern ideas more generally is thought to have occurred in late 1813. He had moved to Weimar after submitting his doctoral thesis *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, and it was in his mother's Weimar salon that he met the orientalist Friedrich Majer. That he was unacquainted with Eastern thought prior to this time seems probable for several reasons. First, he makes no reference to Eastern thought in the 1813 version of his doctoral thesis;¹ second, in his *Manuscript Remains* all but one reference to it date from 1814 onwards (the one occurring in the period 1809-1813); and third, there were relatively few scholarly sources of information about Eastern thought available to Europeans in the early part of the nineteenth century.²

A study of Schopenhauer's *Manuscript Remains* suggests that he first becomes acquainted with Hindu thought around 1813-14, but that he did not acquire much knowledge of Buddhism till after 1818. The two earliest volumes of *Manuscript Remains*, dating from 1804-1818 and from 1809-1818 respectively, contain very few references to Buddhism (I counted two),³ while

¹ However, several references to both Hindu and Buddhist thought are added by Schopenhauer in the revised 1847 edition of *The Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*. See *FFR* p. 50, pp. 184-88, p. 208.

In the third edition, published in 1864, the editor Julius Frauenstädt amends the 1847 text to include corrections and additions jotted down by Schopenhauer in an interleaved copy of the 1847 edition. In Frauenstädt's preface to the third edition he lists the principle passages that are new. Of the 24 listed, 3 concern references to Eastern thought and literature. (See *On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason*, trans. Mme Karl. Hillebrand (London: Bell, 1889), pp. xxvi-xxviii. The three passages in question are in section 34.)

² See H. G. Rawlinson, 'India in European Literature and Thought', in *The Legacy of India*, ed., G. T. Garratt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), pp. 35-36; H. G. Rawlinson, 'Indian Influence on the West', in *Modern India and the West*, ed. L. S. S. O'Malley (London: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 546-47; L. S. S. O'Malley, 'General Survey', in *Modern India and the West*, pp. 801-2; P. J. Marshall, and G. Williams, *The Great Map of Mankind* (London: Dent, London, 1982), pp. 111-12. See also Janaway, *Self and World*, p. 29.

³ See *MSR* 1, p. 456(412) and *MSR* 2, p. 477(412), where Schopenhauer refers to undated editions of the *Asiatic Researches* and *Asiatick Researches* respectively. Because he does not give publication dates it is possible that these references are added to his notes after 1818.

there are at least twenty references to Hindu thought in these volumes after 1813, only one of which is obviously added to the notes at a later date.¹ However, in the third volume of the *Manuscript Remains*, dating from 1818-1830, there are at least fifteen references to Buddhist thought and about thirty to Hinduism. In the final *Manuscript Remains*, covering the period 1830-1860, there are at least seven references to Buddhism and fifteen to Hindu thought. This means that in the period 1813 to 1818 the *Manuscript Remains* contain approximately two references to Buddhist thought compared to at least twenty references in the period 1818 to 1860, and that for the same periods there are at least twenty and forty-five references respectively to Hindu thought. The first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* contains about eight references to Buddhist thought, five of which are added in the later editions (1844 and 1859) of that volume.² By comparison, in the second

However, since elsewhere he makes clear that he has access to these journals prior to 1818 (see *WWR* 2, p. 169(197), and *MSR* 2, pp. 459-61(395-97)), it seems probable that these references are not later additions.

Since Schopenhauer does not consistently provide full details in noting his references, I have where appropriate, made additions and standardised titles and spelling in accordance with the list of titles in Schopenhauer's posthumous library (See E. Grisebach, *Edita und Inedita Schopenhaueriana* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1888), pp. 141-84, and *Der handschriftliche Nachlass*, Fünfter Band, ed. A. Hübscher (Frankfurt a. M.: Verlag Waldemar Kramer, 1968), pp. 319-52). Grisebach's list of titles was compiled from the auction catalogues of 1869 and 1871, and the warehouse catalogue of 1880, which had been prepared for the auction of the library that Schopenhauer had bequeathed to his executor, Wilhelm von Gwinner. While Grisebach's list is extensive, he states that it is incomplete, noting that some books were disposed of by Gwinner in other ways. Grisebach also states that it is only in the case of those books that he personally acquired that he can be certain of the bibliographic exactness of the entries on his list. For the sake of consistency, I have chosen to standardise titles in accordance with the details that he provides. However, in cases where these details differ from those provided by Hübscher I have used the latter since it is the more recent work.)

¹ I refer to Rhode's *On the Religion and Philosophy of the Hindus*, 1827, which Schopenhauer refers to in a footnote at *MSR* 2, p. 459(395). He also refers to undated editions of the *Asiatic Researches*, *MSR* 1, p. 286(260), p. 515(465), the *Asiatick Researches*, *MSR* 2, p. 477(412), and the *Asiatic Magazine*, *MSR* 2, p. 262(245) (Grisebach notes the correct spelling as *Asiatisches Magazin*). However, for the reasons outlined in the last footnote, these references are probably not later additions to Schopenhauer's notes.

² I determined this figure by comparing all references to Buddhism in Payne's translation of the 1859 edition of the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* to the 1819 first edition of that volume (see Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, ed. R. Malter (Frankfurt a. M.: Insel Verlag, 1987). The relevant page numbers in Payne's translation of *WWR* 1 are as follow: p. 381(472), p. 383(474), p. 384(475), p. 424(521-22), p. 484(592). The corresponding page numbers in Malter's edition of *WWR* 1 are as follows: pp. 548-49, p. 550, p. 552, p. 602, p. 665.

volume, first published in 1844 with a second edition in 1859, there are at least thirty references to Buddhism. References to Hindu thought in the first volume number over fifty, seven of which are added in the later editions,¹ and in the second volume there are over forty-five references to Hinduism.² While these figures are only approximate, they indicate a marked rise in Schopenhauer's knowledge of and interest in Buddhist thought from 1818 onwards, and a strong and consistent interest in Hindu thought from 1813 till his death in 1860. That Schopenhauer was in the habit of adding references to his earlier works is clear from the following footnoted comment in the 1859 edition of the first volume:

In the last forty years Indian literature has grown so much in Europe that if I now wished to complete this note to the first edition, it would fill several pages.³

Such comments indicate that Schopenhauer had an abiding interest in Eastern philosophy, and that he was keen to demonstrate parallels between his own doctrines and those of the East.

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As well as considering the number of references to Hindu and Buddhist thought in *The Manuscript Remains* and *The World as Will and Representation*, it is also instructive to look at Schopenhauer's sources for these references. It seems clear that his early sources of knowledge of

¹ The relevant page numbers in Payne's translation of *WWR* 1 are as follows: p. 4(30), p. 181(235), p. 330(412), p. 382n(473n), p. 424(521), p. 436(522), p. 484(592). The corresponding page numbers in Malter's 1819 edition of *WWR* 1 are as follows: p. 4, p. 260, p. 475, pp. 549-50, p. 602, p. 617, p. 665.

² To determine these approximate numbers I noted and cross-checked all references in the index of Payne's translation of *The World as Will and Representation* that pertained to Buddhist and Hindu thought. For the *Manuscript Remains*, since there is no index, I scanned the text for similarly relevant references.

³ *WWR* 1, p. 388n(480n).

Hinduism are the *Oupnek'hat*¹ and the Asiatic journals.² While throughout his works he also frequently refers to the *Vedas*, the *Puranas*³ and the *Bhagavadgita*, praising the ideas expressed in them and drawing parallels with his own doctrines, it seems that his early references to these primary texts originated from articles in the Asiatic journals rather than from an acquaintance with the texts themselves. It is not until 1838 that a translation of part of the *Vedas* first became available,⁴ and the translation of the *Bhagavadgita* to which Schopenhauer makes reference in the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation* is that by A. G. Schlegel, which was not published till 1823.⁵ Schopenhauer first acquired a copy of the *Oupnek'hat* from the Orientalist Friedrich Majer in late 1813,⁶ and its subsequent value to him is evident from

¹ Schopenhauer's *Oupnek'hat* is an 1801 Latin version translated by Anquetil-Duperron of a Persian version translated by Sultan Mohammed Dara Shikoh (brother of Aurangzeb) of the Sanskrit original (see *PP* 2, p. 396(436)).

² In 1784 Sir William Jones established the Asiatic Society in Calcutta, the prototype of similar societies in Europe. The society published volumes of proceedings called *Asiatic Researches* which attracted wide European readership and which were re-issued and translated into French and German. Marshall says that the translations of Sir Charles Wilkins, who made the first English translation of the *Bhagavadgita* in 1785, and who is said to be the first European to really understand Sanskrit, and the essays by Jones in the *Asiatic Researches* set standards that were not to be matched for a generation (Marshall, *The Great Map of Mankind*, p. 76). Furthermore, Rawlinson notes that in 1805 in the *Asiatic Researches* H. T. Colebrooke, the greatest of the early Orientalists, gave the world the first account of the *Vedas*, which hitherto had been jealously concealed from European eyes (Rawlinson, 'Indian Influence on the West', p. 546).

³ The *Puranas* are comprised of a collection of legends that are sometimes said to be part of the fifth *Veda* (*The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edn., s.v. 'South Asian Arts', by Pramod Chandra).

⁴ Rosen published the first edition of some of the hymns of the *Rig-Veda* in 1838 (Rawlinson, 'India in European Thought', p. 36). At *MSR* 4, p. 376(17-18), Schopenhauer also mentions the 1854 publication *Rig-Veda, Text and Notes Sanskrit*, by Max Müller. See also Rawlinson, 'Indian Influence on the West', pp. 547-49, for a discussion of the outstanding pioneering achievements of Max Müller from 1845 onwards. In Rawlinson, 'India in European Literature and Thoughts', p. 36, the author says that 'the publication, in 1875, of the first of the great series of the *Sacred Books of the East*, under the editorship of Max Müller, made the Hindu scriptures available for the first time to the ordinary reader.'

⁵ In the two volumes of the *Manuscript Remains* up to 1818, there are three references to the *Bhagavadgita* (*MSR* 1, p. 452(409), p. 515(465); *MSR* 2, p. 262(245)). No details are given for the first two references, but the *Asiatisches Magazin* is given as the source of the third. In *WWR* 1, there are two references, one of which refers to the 1802 edition of the *Asiatisches Magazin* (*WWR* 1, p. 388n(480n)). The other is not referenced (*WWR* 1, p. 284(358)). In *WWR* 2, of the two references to the *Bhagavadgita*, one is not referenced (*WWR* 2, p. 473(555)), but the other gives as its source the translation by Schlegel (*WWR* 2, p. 326(381)).

⁶ See Hübscher, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer in its Intellectual Context*, pp. 65-66.

his statement in *Parerga and Paralipomena* that 'it [the *Oupnek'hat*] is the most profitable and sublime reading that is possible in the world; it has been the consolation of my life and will be that of my death.'¹ He goes on to assert: 'I am firmly convinced that a real knowledge of the *Upanishads* and thus of the true and esoteric dogmas of the *Vedas* can at present be obtained only from the *Oupnek'hat*.'² However, in addition to the *Oupnek'hat* it is clear that Schopenhauer read any available secondary sources that he could find.³ In the *Manuscript Remains*, in addition to the frequent references to the journals *Asiatic Researches*,⁴ *Asiaticches Magazin*,⁵ *Asiatick Researches*,⁶ and *Asiatic Journal*,⁷ Schopenhauer refers to books and articles by oriental scholars of the time.⁸ In *Parerga and Paralipomena*, under the title 'Some Remarks on Sanskrit Literature', Schopenhauer discusses the merits of various translations of sacred Hindu texts, and in the course of a discussion of Hindu ideas and the possibility that the Indian mythology is remotely related to that of the Greeks, Romans and Egyptians, he mentions additional texts on Hinduism.⁹ In both

¹ PP 2, p. 397(437).

² PP 2, p. 398(438).

³ See also R. K. Das Gupta, 'Schopenhauer and Indian Thought', *East and West* 13, 1 (1962), pp. 32-40, who lists books on Hindu teaching with which Schopenhauer is likely to have been acquainted.

⁴ See MSR 1, p. 286(260) (1814.), p. 456(412) (1816), p. 515(465-66) (1817); MSR 2, pp. 459-61(395-97) (1815-16), p. 477(412) (1816-18).

⁵ See MSR 1, p. 515(465) (1817).

⁶ See MSR 2, p. 262(245) (1809-13).

⁷ See MSR 3, p. 351(319) (1826), p. 658(605) (1828-30), p. 672(618) (1828-30), p. 691(636) (1828-30).

⁸ The literature on Hinduism that he refers to in the *Manuscript Remains* includes:

Polier, *Mythologie des Indous*, Roudolstadt, 1809 (MSR 1, p. 515(465) (1817)); Rhode's *On Religion and Philosophy of the Hindus*, Leipzig, 1827 (MSR 2, p. 459n(395n) (1815-16), which must be a footnote added to the 1815-16 notes after the 1827 publication date of the book, MSR 4, p. 149(125) (1832)); *Desatir* of unknown author (MSR 3, 64(58) (1820)); Wilson, *Iswara Krishna Sankhya-Karica*, Oxford, 1837 (MSR 3, p. 137n(126n) (1820)); F. Schlegel, *Ueber die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier, nebst metrischen Uebersetzungen indischer Gedicht*, Heidelberg, 1808 (MSR 3, p. 442(403) (1828-30)); Colebrooke, *On the Philosophy of the Hindous*, Transactions of the Asiatic London Society, vol. 1 (MSR 3, p. 682(627) (1828-30)); Max Müller, *Rig Veda, Text and Notes Sanskrit*, London, 1854 (MSR 4, p. 376(17-18) (1852-60)); Max Müller, 'On the Veda and the Zend Avesta' in Bunsen, *Hippolytus and his age*, London, 1852 (MSR 4, p. 376(18) (1852-60)).

volumes of *The World as Will and Representation*, and scattered throughout his other works there are many further references to both primary and secondary sources.¹ However, it is noteworthy that all but ten references (seven of which concern either the *Asiatic Researches* or *Asiatisches Magazin*) are to publications after 1818, confirming the view that until that date

⁹ See PP 2, 'Some Remarks on Sanskrit Literature', pp. 395-402(435-43), where Schopenhauer mentions Obry, *Du Nirvana indien, ou de l'affranchissement de l'âme après la mort, selon les Brahmanes et les Bouddhistes*, Amiens, 1856; the *Edinburgh Review*, 1858; Langlès, *Monuments anciens et modernes de l'Hindoustan*, Paris, 1821; Hardy, *Eastern Monachism*, London, 1850; the *Asiatic Researches*; and Schlegel's translation of the *Bhagavadgita*, Bonnae, 1823. Schopenhauer also refers the reader to his essay *On the Basis of Morality*, Section 22, where in a footnote discussion of the genuineness of the *Oupnek'hat* he mentions the secondary texts, F. Windischmann, ed., *Sancara, sive de theologumenis Vedanticorum*, Bonn, 1833; J. J. Bochinger, *Sur la connexion de la vie contemplative ascétique et monastique chez les Indous et chez les peuples bouddhistes*, Strasbourg, 1831, and the recent (in his day) translations of the *Upanishads* by Rammohun Roy, Poley, Colebrooke, and Röer.

Other literature on Hinduism that Schopenhauer refers to in PP 2 includes the following: A Bengal officer, *Vindication of the Hindoos from the aspersions of the Reverend Claudius Buchanan, with a refutation of his arguments in favour of an ecclesiastical establishment in British India: the whole tending to evince the excellence of the moral system of the Hindoos*, 1808 (PP 2, p. 223(243)); *The Times*, 1849 (PP 2, p. 223n(243n)); *The Times*, 1858 (PP 2, p. 226(246)); *Edinburgh Review*, 1858 (PP 2, p. 401(442)).

¹ In WWR 1, the literature on Hinduism that he refers to includes: *Asiatic Researches* (see WWR 1, p. 4(30), p. 48(82), p. 381(471), p. 388n(480n)); *Oupnek'hat* (see WWR 1, p. 181(235), p. 283n(356n), p. 388n(480n)); *Upanishads* (see WWR 1, p. xv(11), p. xvi(11), p. 181(235), p. 205(264), p. 355n(442n), p. 381(471)); *Bhagavad-Gita*, trans. by A. Schlegel, Bonnae, 1823 (see WWR 1, p. 284(358), p. 388n(480n)); *Veda* (see WWR 1, p. xv(11), p. 8(34), p. 17(45), p. 86(128), p. 181(235), p. 205(264), p. 283n(356n), pp. 355-57(442), p. 374(464), p. 380(471), p. 388(480), p. 419(516), p. 495n(604n)); Wilson, *Iswara Krishna Sāṅkhyā Karika*, Oxford, 1837 (see WWR 1, p. 382n(473n)); Colebrooke, 'On the philosophy of the Hindus': *Miscellaneous Essays*, London, 1837 (see WWR 1, p. 382n(473n)); Polier, *Mythologie des Indous*, Roudolstadt, 1809 (see WWR 1, p. 384(475), p. 388n(480n), p. 495n(604n)); *Asiatisches Magazin* (see WWR 1, p. 388n(480n)); *Puranas* (see WWR 1, p. 8(34), p. 17(45), p. 388(480), p. 419(516), p. 495n(473n)).

In WWR 2, the literature on Hinduism that he refers to includes: *Asiatic Researches* (see WWR 2, pp. 169-70(197-98), p. 505(592), p. 608(712)); *Bhagavad-Gita*, translated by A. Schlegel, Bonnae, 1823 (see WWR 2, pp. 326(381), p. 473(555)); *Oupnek'hat* (see WWR 2, p. 457(538), p. 607n(711n), p. 613(718)); *Veda* (see WWR 2, p. 162(189), p. 457(538), p. 475(557), p. 506(592), p. 508(596), p. 608(712), p. 613(718)); *Upanishads* (see WWR 2, p. 162(189), p. 457(538), p. 475(557), p. 609(713), p. 611n(715n)); Colebrooke, 'History of Indian Philosophy' in the *Transactions of the Asiatic London Society* (see WWR 2, p. 488(572)); F. Windischmann, ed., *Sancara, sive de theologumenis Vedanticorum*, Bonn, 1833 (see WWR 2, p. 508n(596n), p. 607n(711n)); Colebrooke, *Miscellaneous Essays*, London, 1837 (see WWR 2, p. 508n(596n)).

In WN, the literature on Hinduism that he refers to includes: Colebrooke, 'Report on the Vedas' in the *Asiatic Researches*, vol. 8 (undated) (WN, p. 249(230)); Bopp, 'Sundas and Upanunda', in *Ardschuna's Reise zu Indra's Himmel*, 1824.

In BM, the literature on Hinduism that he refers to includes: *Bhagavadgita* (BM, p. 213(pp. 314-15)).

Schopenhauer's main sources of knowledge of Hindu thought were the *Oupnek'hat* and articles in the Asiatic journals.¹

Turning now to Schopenhauer's sources of Buddhist teaching, the entries in the first two volumes of the *Manuscript Remains* indicate that Schopenhauer's primary source prior to 1818 is the *Asiatic Researches*; there are only two references to Buddhism in these volumes, and they both refer to that journal as their source.² However, from 1818 onwards Schopenhauer's sources become more diversified, a fact that he himself alludes to in the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation* when he states that 'up till 1818, when my work appeared, there were to be found in Europe only a very few accounts of Buddhism, and those extremely incomplete and inadequate, confined almost entirely to a few essays in the earlier volumes of the *Asiatic Researches*, and principally concerned with the Buddhism of the Burmese.'³ The increased availability of information after 1818 is reflected in the *Manuscript Remains* for the later periods, 1818 to 1830, and 1830 to 1860, where he refers to journals and other secondary texts.⁴ Also, in the chapter entitled 'Sinology' in his

¹ Excluding the *Asiatisches Magazin* and *Asiatic Researches*, which are dated 1802, and 1806-12 respectively, Grisebach and Hübscher each list approximately 40 other titles that specifically refer to Hinduism. While up to 18 of these have publication dates earlier than 1818, only two (the works by Polier and F. Schlegel) are mentioned in the *Manuscript Remains* in the period before 1818. It therefore seems likely that it was not till after 1818 that Schopenhauer acquired the other titles.

² *MSR* 1, p. 456(412); *MSR* 2, p. 477(412).

³ *WWR* 2, p. 169(197).

⁴ As in the case of reference to works concerning Hinduism, since Schopenhauer does not consistently provide full details in noting his references, I have, where appropriate, made amendments in accordance with the details provided in Grisebach's list. In cases where Schopenhauer refers to works that do not appear on this list, but which do appear in the bibliography that Schopenhauer himself provides in his chapter, 'Sinology' in *On the Will in Nature*, I use the fuller details noted there.

The following literature on Buddhism is referred to in the *Manuscript Remains* for the periods, 1818 to 1830 and 1830 to 1860: *Journal Asiatique* (*MSR* 3, p. 66(60) (1820), p. 336(305) (1825)); *Asiatic Journal* (*MSR* 3, p. 349(317) (1826), p. 424(389) (1828), p. 658(605) (1828-30)); Morrison, *Chinese Dictionary*, 1815 (*MSR* 3, p. 60(55) (1820)), *Santsung fa sou*, the principle document of the Buddhist religion (*MSR* 3, p. 372(339) (1826)), Abel Rémusat, *Mélanges asiatiques*, 1825 (*MSR* 3, p. 372(339) (1826), p. 337n(306n) (1826)), Upham, *The History and the Doctrine of Buddhism*, London, 1829 (*MR* 3, p. 675(621) (1828-30)), I. J. Schmidt, *Geschichte der Ost-Mongolen und ihres Fürstenhauses*, St. Petersburg, 1829 (*MSR* 4, p. 47(33) (1830-31)), B. Hodgson, descriptions of Buddhism

essay *On the Will in Nature*, Schopenhauer recommends to his readers a list of twenty six works on Buddhism of which he says 'I can really recommend [them] for I possess them and know them well.'¹ In both volumes of *The World as Will and Representation* and scattered throughout his other works there are many further references to both primary and secondary sources.²

in Nepal as recorded in the *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, London, 1828, and as elucidated by I. J. Schmidt, in his essay in *Mémoires de l'Académie de St. Petersbourg* (MSR 4, p. 455(91) (1852-60)).

¹ WN, pp. 361-63n(327n). Schopenhauer lists the following works, whose details I amend according to Grisebach's list in cases where the works appear on both lists, but with slightly different details on each: 1. I. J. Schmidt, *Dsanglun oder der Weise und der Thor*, St. Petersburg, 1843; 2. I. J. Schmidt, Several lectures delivered to the Academy of St. Petersburg in 1829-32; most probably Schopenhauer is referring to the following lectures listed by Grisebach: *Ueber einige Grundlehren des Buddhismus*, 1929, *Ueber einige Grundlehren des Buddhismus*, 1830, *Ueber die sogenannte dritte Welt der Buddhaisten als Fortsetzung der Abhandlungen über die ihren des Buddhismus*, 1831, *Ueber die tausend Buddhas einer Weltperiode der Einwohnung oder gleichmässigen Dauer*, 1832; 3. I. J. Schmidt, *Forschungen im Gebiete der älteren religiösen, politischen und litterarischen Bildungsgeschichte der Völker Mittelasiens, vorzüglich der Mongolen und Tibeter*, St. Petersburg, 1824; 4. I. J. Schmidt, *Ueber die Verwandtschaft der gnostisch-theosophischen Lehren mit den Religionssystemen des Orients, vorzüglich dem Buddhismus*, Leipzig, 1828; 5. I. J. Schmidt, *Ssanang Ssetsen Chung-Taidschi, Geschichte der Mongolen und ihres Fürsthauses*, St. Petersburg, 1829; 6. Schnieffer, two treatises in German in the 'Mélanges Asiatiques tirés du Bulletin Historico-Philol. de l'Acad. d. St. Petersburg', Tome 1, 1851; 7. Samuel Turner, *Gesandtschaftsreise an den Hof des Teshoo Lama. Uus dem Englischen*, 1801; 8. J. Boehinger, *Sur la connexion de la vie contemplative, ascétique et monastique chez les Indous et chez les peuples bouddhistes*, Strasbourg, 1831; 9. *Journal Asiatique*, vol. 7, 1825; 10. E. Burnouf, *Introduction 'a l'histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, Paris, 1844; 11. *Rgya Tch'er Rol Pa*, trans. from Tibetan by Foucaux, 1848; 12. Chi Fa Hian, *Foe Koue Ki*, trans. from Chinese by Abel Rémusat, Paris, 1836; 13. *Description du Tibet*, trans. by Bitchourin and Klaproth, 1831; 14. Klaproth, *Fragments Bouddhiques*, 1831; 15. Spiegel, *Liber de officiis Sacerdotum Buddhicorum*, Bonnae, 1841; 16. Spiegel, *Anecdota Palica*, 1845; 17. Fausbøll, *Dhammapadam*, Hovniae, 1855; 18. Buchanan, 'On the Religion of the Burmas', and Körösa, C., three articles, including 'Analyses of the Books of the Kandshur', *Asiatic Researches*; 1839; 19. Sangermano, *The Burmese Empire*, Rome, 1833; 20. Turnour, *The Mahawanzo; and a prefatory essay on Pali Buddhistical literature*, Ceylon, 1836; 21. Upham, *The Mahāvansi: the Rājā Ratnācari and the Rāyā-vali*, London, 1833; 22. Upham, *The History and doctrine of Buddhism*, London, 1829; 23. Hardy, *Eastern Monachism*, London, 1850; 24. Hardy, *Manual of Buddhism in its modern development*, London, 1853; 25. C. F. Koeppen, *Die Religion des Buddha*, 1857; 26. 'The Life of Buddha' from the Chinese of Palladji, in the *Archiv für wissenschaftliche Kunde von Russland*, ed. Erman, vol. xv, Heft 1, 1856.

Other works on Buddhism that Schopenhauer also refers to in 'Sinology' are: *Asiatic Journal*, 1826; Morrison, *Chinese Dictionary*, Macao, 1815; Neumann, 'Die Natur-und Religions-Philosophie der Chinesen, nach den Werken des Tchu-hi', an article in Illgen, *Periodical for Historical Theology*, vol. vii, 1837; (Grisebach's lists only *Asiatische Studien*, Leipzig, 1837, against Neumann's name. However, given that the dates of the two titles are the same, they may refer to the same article).

² The works on Buddhism referred to in WWR 1 are: Chi Fa Hian, *Foe Koue Ki*, trans. from Chinese by Abel Rémusat, Paris, 1836 (see WWR 1, p. 381(472)); Upham, *The History and Doctrine of Buddhism*, London, 1829 (see WWR 1, p. 484).

The works on Buddhism referred to in WWR 2 are: I. J. Schmidt, *Ueber das Mahājāna and Pradhnā-Pāramita der Bauddhen*, 1836 (see WWR 2, p. 275(321-22)); *Rgya Tch'er Rol Pa*,

Only two of these works were published prior to 1818.¹ Finally, in both Grisebach's and Hübscher's listings of titles in Schopenhauer's library, only three of those that specifically refer to Buddhist thought have publication dates before 1818.²

Going into such detail concerning the extent and timing of Schopenhauer's acquaintance with Eastern underlines the likely influence that Eastern ideas had on the development of his thinking. At his death, Schopenhauer had accumulated a library of at least one hundred and thirty items of orientalia.³

trans. from Tibetan by Foucaux, Paris, 1848 (see WWR 2, p. 400n(473n)); Upham, *The History and Doctrine of Buddhism*, London, 1829 (see WWR 2, p. 488(572)); Hardy, *Manual of Buddhism in its modern development*, London, 1853; Taylor, *Prabodha Chadro Daya*, London, 1812; Sangermano, *The Burmese Empire*, Rome, 1833; *Asiatic Researches*, Köppen, *Die Religion des Buddha*, 1857; Obry, *Du Nirvana indien*, Amiens, 1856; and T. Burnet, *Histoire du Manichéisme* (see WWR 2, pp. 503-4(592)); Hardy, *Eastern Monachism*, London, 1850; I. J. Schmidt, *Geschichte der Mongolen und ihres Fürstenhauses*, St. Petersburg, 1829; Colebrooke in *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society* (see WWR 2, p. 508n(596n)); *Asiatic Researches* (see WWR 2, p. 608(712)); E. Burnouf, *Introduction à l'histoire du Buddhism Indien*, Paris, 1844 (see WWR 2, p. 623(730)); I. J. Schmidt, *Ueber die Verwandtschaft der gnostisch-theosophischen Lehren mit den Religionssystemen des Orients, vorzüglich dem Buddhismus*, Leipzig, 1828 (see WWR 2, p. 624(731)).

In *BM*, the works on Buddhism that he refers to include: *Journal Asiatique*; vol. ix, Meng-Tseu, ed. Stan. Julian, 1824; *Livres sacrés de l'orient*, undated (*BM*, p. 186n(132n)).

In *PP 1* and *PP 2*, the works on Buddhism that he refers to include: F. Buchanan, 'On the Religion of the Burmese', *Asiatic Researches*, vol. vi, 1839 (*PP 1*, p. 116n(132n)); I. J. Schmidt, *Forschungen im Gebiete der älteren religiösen, politischen und litterarischen Bildungsgeschichte der Völker Mittelasiens, vorzüglich der Mongolen und Tibeter*, St Petersburg, 1824 (*PP 1*, p. 116n(132n); *PP 2*, p. 153(168)); Sir G. Stanton, *An Enquiry into the proper mode of rendering the word of God in translating the Sacred Scriptures into the Chinese Language*, London, 1848 (*PP 1*, p. 116n(132n)); S. Hardy, *Eastern Monachism*, London, 1850 (*PP 2*, p. 84n(95n), p. 358(395)); S. Hardy, *Manual of Buddhism*, London, 1853 (*PP 2*, p. 84n(95n), p. 276(300)); Klaproth, *Fragmen's bouddhiques in the Nouveau Journal asiatique*, 1831; Koeppen, *Die Lamaische Hierarchie*, undated (*PP 2*, p. 153(168)); I. J. Schmidt, *Sanang Ssetsen Chung-Taidschi, Geschichte der Mongolen und ihres Fürstenhauses*, St. Petersburg, 1839; *Lettres édifiantes et curieuses*, 1819 (*PP 2*, p. 203(221)); Sangermano, *The Burmese Empire*, Rome, 1833; *Asiatic Researches*, vol. vi, ix (*PP 2*, p. 276(300)); Obry, *Du Nirvana indien, ou de l'affranchissement de l'âme après la mort, selon les Brahmanes et les Bouddhistes*, Amiens, 1856 (*PP 2*, p. 401(441)).

¹ The two are: Morrison, *Chinese Dictionary*, Macao, 1815; and Samuel Turner, *Gesandtschaftsreise an den Hof des Teshoo Lama*. Aus dem Englischen, 1801.

² The three that appear in both lists are: M. Ozeray, *Recherches sur Bouddhou*, Paris, 1817; Abel Rémusat, *Le livre des récompenses et des peines, traduit du chinois avec des notes et des éclaircissements*, Paris, 1816; and Samuel Turner, *Gesandtschaftsreise an den Hof des Teshoo Lama*. Aus dem Englischen, 1801. The total number of titles specifically referring to Buddhist thought is thirty-eight in Grisebach's list and forty-four in Hübscher's list.

³ Grisebach's lists about 130 such items while Hübscher list approximately 150. Whatever figure is the more accurate, it represents a considerable collection, and suggests that Schopenhauer has a strong and abiding interest in Eastern ideas.

Given this evidence, as well as the many references to Eastern thought that appear in his works, it seems reasonable to conclude that Schopenhauer had an abiding interest in Hindu and Buddhist ideas throughout his life. This raises the question of whether and to what extent these ideas exerted an influence on Schopenhauer's own doctrines, and it is to this question that I now turn.

2

Schopenhauer states: 'I owe what is best in my own development to the impression made by Kant's works, the sacred writings of the Hindus, and Plato.'¹ Writing in 1818 in the Preface to the First Edition of *The World as Will and Representation* he says that while Kant's philosophy is the only one with which a thorough acquaintance is positively assumed, a knowledge of Plato is also desirable. And regarding the Hindus, he states:

But if he [the reader] has shared in the benefits of the *Vedas*, access to which, opened to us by the *Upanishads*, is in my view the greatest advantage which this still young century has to show over previous centuries, since I surmise that the influence of Sanskrit literature will penetrate no less deeply than did the revival of Greek literature in the fifteenth century; if, I say, the reader has also already received and assimilated the divine inspiration of ancient Indian wisdom, then he is — best of all prepared to hear what I have to say to him. It will not speak to him, as to many others, in a strange and even hostile tongue; for, did it not sound too conceited, I might assert that each of the individual and disconnected utterances that make up the *Upanishads* could be derived as a consequence from the thought I am to impart,

¹ WWR 1, p. 417(513).

*although conversely my thought is by no means to be found in the Upanishads.*¹

From the last sentence of this passage it is clear that while Schopenhauer readily sees parallels between his own philosophy and that of Hindu thought, he does not believe that the development and expression of his own ideas is in any way dependent on the ideas expressed in the sacred Hindu texts. In the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation* he also disclaims direct influence of Buddhist ideas, maintaining that:

In any case, it must be a pleasure to me to see my doctrine in such close agreement with a religion that the majority of men on earth hold as their own, for this numbers far more followers than any other. And this agreement must be yet the more pleasing to me, *inasmuch as in my philosophising I have certainly not been under its influence.*²

However, this disavowal of influence needs to be balanced against other remarks that Schopenhauer makes, and against developments evident in his writings.³ With regard to the first, the following passage written in 1816 is relevant.

Moreover, I confess that I do not believe my doctrine could have come about before the Upanishads, Plato and Kant could cast their rays simultaneously into the mind of one man.⁴

¹ WWR 1, pp. xv-xvi(11) (italics mine).

² WWR 2, p. 169(197) (italics mine). See also WWR 2, pp. 508-9n(596n), MSR 3, p. 336(305).

³ See Dorothea W. Dauer, *Schopenhauer as Transmitter of Buddhist Ideas*, European University Papers, Series 1, vol. 15 (Berne: Herbert Lang, 1969), pp. 6-9, who notes that while Schopenhauer claims that his own doctrines are independent of the influence of Hindu and Buddhist thought, he is probably much more indebted to them than he realises.

⁴ MSR 1, p. 467(422).

While in this passage he does not speak of direct influence, Schopenhauer nevertheless strongly suggests that his reading of the *Upanishads* is essential to the formulation of his own ideas. Also relevant here are his somewhat ambiguous comments regarding what he sees as the unchanging character of his philosophy. In the *Manuscript Remains* he states in a footnote dated 1849:

These sheets, written at Dresden in the years 1814-1818, show the fermentative process of my thinking, from which at that time my whole philosophy emerged, rising gradually like a beautiful landscape from the morning mist. *Here it is worth noting that even in 1814 (in my 27th year) all the dogmas of my system, even the unimportant ones, were established.*¹

It seems that Schopenhauer only became acquainted with Oriental thought in late 1813. Given the above two passages, it seems that we must assume that either his reading of the *Upanishads* made such a dramatic and sudden impression on him that he could maintain that by 1814 all his ideas were settled, or that in the above passage he means that while certain central ideas were formed by 1814, they subsequently developed over the next four years. The latter view is the more plausible, particularly since in the above passage he himself speaks of the 'fermentative process of my thinking' between 1814 and 1818, and that the previous passage was not written till 1816. Furthermore, given the numerous and varied references to the ideas of the Hindus in the first two volumes of *Manuscript Remains* (at least twenty) and in the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* (at least fifty), it seems plausible to suppose that the degree of familiarity thus presupposed is acquired over a number of years, rather than all at once in late 1813 to 1814. The above passages and argument support the conclusion that Schopenhauer's

¹ MSR 1, p. 122n(113n) (italics mine).

acquaintance with Hinduism had a significant input into the formation of his own doctrines as they appeared in the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation*. I argued earlier that Schopenhauer's disavowal of any Eastern influence on his doctrines needs to be balanced against other remarks that he makes and against developments that are evident in his writings. I now propose to look at some of these developments, as I maintain that contrary to Schopenhauer's disclaimers, they also suggest a similar if not stronger influence of Eastern thought on his thinking after 1818.

3

There are three identifiable shifts in Schopenhauer's thinking between the publication of the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, and that of his later works. The first concerns what he says about the knowability of the thing-in-itself, the second concerns what he says about the nature of the thing-in-itself, and the third concerns his explicit attempt to assimilate his own doctrines about what can be said of the thing-in-itself with Eastern doctrines.

The most important of these three, as is noted by other commentators, is the first—what Schopenhauer asserts about the knowability of the thing-in-itself.¹ Schopenhauer asserts numerous times throughout his works that the thing-in-itself is will or will-to-live, and he claims that we know this through direct intuition in self-consciousness.² However, there are also passages in his later works in which he seems to withdraw the claim that in self-consciousness we are aware of the will as thing-in-itself, suggesting instead that in self-

¹ See Höffding, *History of Modern Philosophy*, p. 226, Copleston, *Arthur Schopenhauer*, p. 65, Gardiner, *Schopenhauer*, p. 173, Hamlyn, *Schopenhauer*, pp. 84-85, Janaway, *Self and World*, p. 196.

² *WWR* 2, p. 600(703); *WWR* 1, p. 162(215), p. 436(536), p. 503(614), p. 504(615); *WN*, p. 216(202), p. 345(310). For less explicit references see *WWR* 2, p. 179(209), p. 195(228), p. 313(367), p. 364(433); *WWR* 1, p. 288(363), p. 290(365); *FFR*, pp. 119-20(99).

consciousness we are aware of no more than our phenomenal willings.¹ If we accept this latter suggestion, Schopenhauer's claim that the thing-in-itself is will seems either to be without foundation or to be a misleading way of making the much weaker claim that the thing-in-itself is called will because in introspective awareness we are closest to the thing-in-itself, and in introspection the object of our awareness is will. While some commentators adopt this latter interpretation,² it is implausible—for the reasons noted in discussing Interpretation 4 of Chapter 2. For Interpretation 4—according to which the nature of the thing-in-itself is unknown but it is called will because the will stands nearest to the thing-in-itself—is inconsistent with Schopenhauer's many assertions that the thing-in-itself *is* will and with the corollary that metaphysics concerns the thing-in-itself. Since, these assertions are the principal ways in which Schopenhauer sees his own philosophy as an advance upon that of Kant's, their inconsistency with Interpretations 4 is a major difficulty for that interpretation.

Furthermore, if Schopenhauer's claim that the thing-in-itself is will rests on the supposition that in introspective awareness of will there are fewer phenomenal forms standing between the thing-in-itself and the knowing subject, then his argument is an extremely weak.³ For, as both Janaway and Young point out, there are no grounds for believing that a small number of phenomenal forms will more truly reveal the nature of underlying reality than a large number.⁴ In the light of the above considerations it is more plausible to

¹ *WWR* 2, p. 182(213), p. 185(216-17), pp. 196-97(229-30), p. 197(230), pp. 197-98(231), p. 318(372), p. 496(581), p. 612(716); *PP* 1, p. 42(54); *MSR* 3, p. 40(36-37), p. 114(103), p. 171(155), p. 353(321-22), p. 472(432), p. 595(546), p. 713(657), p. 716(660); *MSR* 4, pp. 296-97(261).

² See Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche*, pp. 33-34, Tsanoff, *Schopenhauer's Criticism of Kant's Theory of Experience*, pp. 66-70, Whittaker, *Reason*, p. 98, Hübscher, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer in its Intellectual Context*, p. 20.

³ See Chapter 1.

⁴ See Young, *Willing and Unwilling*, p. 30; Janaway, *Self and World*, p. 197.

suggest that the passages in the later works, in which Schopenhauer apparently withdraws his claim of direct acquaintance with the thing-in-itself as will, indicate a shift in his thinking. While he continues to assert in the later works that the thing-in-itself is will, and that we are directly aware of it in self-consciousness, the presence of the above-mentioned passages indicate that in the years following the publication of the first volume he became increasingly aware of the epistemological difficulties attending this claim.

Schopenhauer's use of the veil metaphor in some of the passages supporting Interpretation 4 illustrates his uneasiness.¹ He wants to claim that just as we both do and do not know an object that is concealed by a veil, so in introspective awareness we both do and do not know the thing-in-itself that is concealed behind the temporal form. Our *not* being able to know the thing-in-itself is consistent with Kant's teaching that introspection yields only knowledge of inner phenomena, and as I argued in Chapter 2, it may be the strong influence of Kant on Schopenhauer's thinking that prompts him to qualify his oft-repeated claim of direct awareness. However, as Schopenhauer holds that the Kantian influence on his thinking is strongest in his youth,² it may well be that other factors were also at work. Another explanation, which I alluded to in Chapter 1, is put by Höffding, namely that Schopenhauer modified his views in the later work after reflecting upon the critical reviews of his earlier work.³ However, since, Schopenhauer was generally disdainful of critics and their comments, it seems that this can at best be a partial explanation. Consequently, while the influence of Kant's epistemology and critical reviews may partly explain the above-mentioned passages, a more

¹ *WWR* 2, p. 182(213), p. 197(230), p. 318(372).

² See *WWR* 1, p. xiv(9).

³ See Höffding, *History of Modern Philosophy*, p. 226 (note 51).

enduring influence is also called for in order to explain this shift in his thinking after 1818.

The second development in Schopenhauer's thinking concerns what he asserts about the nature of the thing-in-itself. The traditional interpretation of Schopenhauer's metaphysics is that the thing-in-itself is will or will-to-live. He makes this claim many times throughout his writings, and furthermore, as the title of his main work suggests, he also asserts that reality comprises just two aspects, will and representation.¹ However, in his later works Schopenhauer introduces the idea that the thing-in-itself has multiple aspects only one of which is will. Its other aspects are the objects of awareness of such persons as mystics, saints and ascetics, who have denied the will.²

The third shift in Schopenhauer's thinking concerns his explicit attempt to assimilate his own views on what can be said about the thing-in-itself with Eastern doctrines. According to Interpretation 5 the thing-in-itself can be described as will, but only in a metaphorical sense. Of the six passages supporting this interpretation three are in his earlier and three in his later works, suggesting that the importance of Interpretation 5 to Schopenhauer did not vary.³ However, in two of the later passages he explicitly assimilates his own views with what he sees as similar views expressed in Eastern thought, and this assimilation is in keeping with his increasing knowledge of and admiration for the East.⁴ One further passage is worth mentioning. When discussing the state of denial of the will in the first edition of the first volume

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 4(31), p. 125(172-73), p. 141(191), p. 153(204-5), p. 162(215), p. 502(613).

² *WWR* 2, p. 198(231), p. 560(656), p. 644(754); *PP* 2, p. 312(339). Interpretation 3 also receives some support from the following passages: *WWR* 2, p. 288(338), p. 294(343), p. 642(753); *MSR* 3, p. 79(70); *WWR* 1, p. 405(500), p. 411(507) (See Chapter 2).

³ *WWR* 2, p. 325(380), p. 325-26(381); *MSR* 1, pp. 36-37(34-35); *MSR* 4, p. 35(23); *WWR* 1, pp. 110-22(155), p. 410(506).

⁴ *WWR* 2, p. 325(380), pp. 325-26(381).

of *The World as Will and Representation* (1818), Schopenhauer draws attention to the ways in which his doctrine and those of the East differ.

We must not evade it, as the Indians do, by myths and meaningless words, such as reabsorption in *Brahman*, or the *Nirvana* of the Buddhists. On the contrary, we freely acknowledge that what remains after the complete abolition of the will is for all who are still full of the will, assuredly nothing. But also conversely, to those in whom the will has turned and denied itself, this very real world of ours with all its suns and galaxies, is—nothing.¹

However, in the second edition of the first volume (1844), he adds the following footnote to the above passage.

This is also the Prajna—Paramita of the Buddhists, the 'beyond all knowledge', in other words, the point where subject and object no longer exist. See J. Schmidt, *Über das Mahajana und Pradschna-Paramita*.

Since the work by Schmidt to which Schopenhauer refers was not published till 1836, it seems that between the publications of the first and second volumes of *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer's understanding of the Buddhist concept of Nirvana changes and that he sees parallels between his later understanding of that notion and his own doctrine of denial of the will. And he suggests that what the two views have in common is the recognition that our ordinary ways of knowing and describing the phenomenal world are inapplicable to knowing and describing the object of awareness of saints and mystics.

¹ WWR 1, pp. 411-12(508).

The above-mentioned passages support the view that in the years following the publication of the first edition of the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer increasingly sought to find parallels between his own and Eastern ideas on what can be said about the thing-in-itself. And this practice at least leaves open the possibility that his increasing knowledge and admiration for Eastern thought actually influenced his thinking, giving rise to the shifting nature of his views concerning the knowability and nature of the thing-in-itself.

To summarise: There are three identifiable shifts in Schopenhauer's thinking between the publication of the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* and his later works. They concern the knowability of the thing-in-itself, the nature of the thing-in-itself, and Schopenhauer's explicit attempt to assimilate his own doctrines concerning what can be said about the thing-in-itself with Eastern ideas. While the influence of Kant and of critical reviews may partly explain the first of these shifts, a more enduring influence is also called for to explain all three shifts.

A consideration of the relation between Schopenhauer's own doctrines and those for which he sees parallels in Eastern thought reveals a likely source of influence that may help account for these shifts. Schopenhauer's increasing knowledge of, and familiarity with Hindu and Buddhist thought after 1818, increases his awareness of the incompatibility of some of his own doctrines with theirs; and that his ensuing uneasiness provides a plausible explanation that may in part account for the shifts in his thinking, and for the resulting inconsistencies that appear in his writings.

4

To make clearer how Eastern ideas may in part account for the presence of passages in Schopenhauer's later works in which he seems to withdraw from

his earlier claims, it is worth looking at Schopenhauer's likely understanding of both Hindu and Buddhist teaching.

Orthodox Hindu religion recognises the validity of the *Vedas* as the authoritative scriptural texts. Of these texts, the *Upanishads* are the most metaphysical and systematic in style, although there are often seemingly conflicting strands of thought expressed in them, and these have given rise to a range of interpretations. The *Upanishads* represent the final stage in the tradition of the *Vedas* and for this reason the teaching that is based on them is known as the Vedanta (Sanskrit: 'conclusion of the *Veda*'). Within the Vedanta there exist different sub-schools of thought, the most important of which are the school of Nondualism (Advaita, whose main exponent is the eighth-century philosopher Sankara), qualified Nondualism (Visistvaita, which develops in the twelfth century), and Dualism (Dvaita, which develops in the thirteenth century). Frederick Copleston notes that Schopenhauer's philosophy bears some resemblance to the most prominent form of Vedanta, Advaita.¹ Although Schopenhauer writes only of the Vedanta and does not mention its various sub-schools, some of his most important doctrines are mirrored in those of the Advaita school. That he is acquainted with Advaita teaching seems clear from his reference in *The Manuscript Remains* to Windischmann's *Sancara sive de Theologia Vedanticorum*,² a book also listed by Grisebach in his catalogue of titles in Schopenhauer's posthumous library.

According to Advaita teaching as articulated by Sankara, Brahman, the Holy Power spoken of in the *Upanishads* and elsewhere referred to as the sustainer

¹ Bryan Magee, *The Great Philosophers* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987), 'Schopenhauer', by Frederick Copleston, p. 215.

While Schopenhauer does not mention the three sub-schools of the Vedanta system it is clear that he is aware that the Vedanta is only one of several systems of Orthodox Hindu thought (See *MSR* 3, p. 442, where he refers to Schlegel's discussion of the six sects of the Hindus, and *MSR* 2, pp. 701-4, where he goes on to discuss the merits of these various systems).

² *MSR* 3, p. 701(646).

of the cosmos is identical with Atman, the self. Consequently, since they are identical, there is only one Absolute, and similarly, there is only one Self, which is not to be identified with the empirical Ego which undergoes reincarnation. Further, given that Brahman alone is real, the world (together with empirical egos) considered as distinct from Brahman, is an illusion (maya). Sankara's monism not only claims to give a correct interpretation to central scriptural texts, but also claims to simultaneously preserve both the chief insights of the *Veda* and the common-sense attitudes that appear to be in conflict with this illusionist doctrine. He achieves this by introducing the notion of two levels of truth; the higher are expressed in the mystical experience of release and identification with Brahman, while the lower are expressed in both religious and common-sense descriptions of the world. For the person who has not attained the higher insight, spatio-temporal objects such as trees and rivers are real, but for the person who has attained the higher viewpoint, these objects are illusory, and reality is the undifferentiated 'one' of which the mystics speak.¹

It is not difficult to see parallels between Advaita philosophy, as outlined above, and the following of Schopenhauer's own doctrines: his doctrine that the will as thing-in-itself is the sustainer of the world; his doctrine that the will as thing-in-itself is identical with the will that is objectified in individual phenomena, a view that he expresses by asserting the identity of the macrocosm and the microcosm,² his doctrine that there is only one will and only one knowing subject, in the sense that both lie outside the forms of differentiation, space and time;³ his doctrine that our essential nature, the will

¹ *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edwards, s. v. 'Indian Philosophy', by Ninian Smart.

² See *WWR* 1, p. 162(216), p. 332(414); *WWR* 2, p. 486(570), p. 591(692).

³ However, Schopenhauer's knowing self does not seem analogous to the Hindu Self that is identical with Brahman, since Schopenhauer says of the knowing self that it is a tertiary phenomenon. It is metaphysically dependent upon the presence of consciousness, and the latter is in turn an objectification of will (*WWR* 2, p. 278(325)). He also takes the 'I' to be a

as thing-in-itself, is not to be identified with empirical consciousness, since the former is a timeless One, while the latter is distinct and transient; his doctrine that the will as thing-in-itself alone is real, while the world (together with consciousness) considered as distinct from the will as thing-in-itself is an illusion; his doctrine that there are two kinds of awareness of reality, perceptual awareness, which is the foundation of egoism, and mystical awareness, which is the foundation of moral goodness.¹

Without dwelling on the closeness of these parallels, there are two striking instances in which Schopenhauer's doctrines do not find any agreement with the above outline of Advaita philosophy. The first is his doctrine that the thing-in-itself, or ultimate reality, is a will that is the source of immense suffering in the world (Interpretation 1, 2 and 3). Such a view seems incompatible with the Advaita conception of Brahman as the Holy Power,²

composite of the knowing and willing subjects, with the willing subject being the more fundamental. On this view, the 'I', or self, is the intelligible character. However, since Schopenhauer describes the latter as 'an act of will outside time' (*WWR* 1, p. 289(364)) it seems that it too is not identical with the will as thing-in-itself, but is instead a manifestation of it. See Janaway's book for a comprehensive discussion of the inherent tensions in Schopenhauer's philosophy that result from this twofold conception of the self. See also Richard E. Aquila, 'On the "Subjects" of Knowing and Willing and the "I" in Schopenhauer', *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 10, 3 (1993), pp. 241-60. Aquila attempts to overcome the alleged difficulties in Schopenhauer's dual account of the self by interpreting the knowing self as 'the pure form of the directedness of consciousness itself'. As such it is neither the material that constitutes the body nor the will that is manifest in it, but is rather an irreducible phenomenal 'projection' through those ingredients (p. 248). However, since such a knowing self is clearly not identical with the will as thing-in-itself, there is no parallel with the Atman-Brahman identity of Hindu philosophy.

¹ It is also possible to see resemblances between some of Schopenhauer's doctrines and those of the Samkyha school, another of the six main systems of Hindu thought. Resemblances between that school and Schopenhauer's doctrines include its atheism, and its explanation of the perceptible world in terms of a single unitary substance, evolving according to rudimentary dynamics. However, there are distinct differences too in that it posits a plurality of eternal selves and a correspondence theory of perception. (See *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edwards, s.v. 'Indian Philosophy', pp. 156-57.) That Schopenhauer is aware of both the resemblances and differences is clear from his discussion in the chapter 'Remarks on Sanskrit Literature' in *PP* 2, p. 399(439-40). There he makes clear that he values the older Vedic formulation more highly than the Samkhya system.

² See Helmuth von Glasenapp, 'The Influence of Indian Thought on German Philosophy and Literature', *Calcutta Review* 29 (1928), p. 203, who also notes this incompatibility. He says 'Whilst, however, for the Vedanta what exists is our eternally blessed spirituality, the Brahma, that is characterised by the attributes Sat, Cit, and Ananda, it is for Schopenhauer a blind and therefore unblest will.'

although it might be thought to have some similarity with the other conception of it as the sustainer of the cosmos.¹ Of Schopenhauer's references to Brahman or Brahm or Brahma in the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, all refer to it in its role as sustainer, creator and originator. For example:

Each day of the creator Brahma has a thousand such periods of four ages, and his night again has a thousand such periods. His year has 365 days and as many nights. He lives a hundred of his years, always creating; and when he dies a new Brahma is at once born, and so on from eternity to eternity.²

In Brahma's role of sustainer, one can see some parallel to Schopenhauer's thing-in-itself in its role as an endlessly striving will-to-live, the essence and explanation of all phenomenal reality. For example:

Thus everywhere in nature we see contest, struggle, and the fluctuation of victory, and later on we shall recognize in this more distinctly that variance with itself essential to the will. Every grade of the will's objectification fights for the matter, the space, and the time of another. Persistent matter must constantly change the form, since,

¹ Kaplan asserts that Brahman refers to the ultimate reality that transcends all differentiation and of which all else is only a manifestation. However, he also notes that the word has a number of other different meanings. In its most literal sense it refers to certain rituals in the Vedas, but later it becomes the name of one of the deities, the king or ruler of all the Gods, who still remains as the chief of the great trinity of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva. In another usage it refers to the name of the priestly caste in the service of the deities (See Abraham Kaplan, *The New World of Philosophy* (London: Collins, 1962), p. 241).

While Schopenhauer writes of Brahman as being 'the original being himself' (*WWR* 2, p. 463(543)), he also says of salvation that it is the 'reunion with Brahma' (*WWR* 2, p. 608(712)). It is clear that he knows that Brahma is one of the three deities and that these are popular personifications of the world-soul Brahm (*PP* 1, p. 127(144-45)). Consequently, in the following discussion I include his references to all three terms; Brahma, Brahman and Brahm. While he refers to a belief in the Vedas as both Brahmanism and Hinduism, I use only the latter term. He also uses the term Brahmans and Hindus to refer to those who teach and practice the doctrine of the Vedas, but again I use only the latter term.

² *WWR* 1, p. 495n(604-5n). See also *WWR* 1, p. 276(348), p. 399(493), and in the second volume see *WWR* 2, p. 463(267), p. 489(574).

under the guidance of causality, mechanical, physical, chemical, and organic phenomena, eagerly striving to appear, snatch the matter from one another, for each wishes to reveal its own Idea. This contest can be followed through the whole of nature; indeed only through it does nature exist.¹

That Schopenhauer himself interprets the Hindu conception of Brahma as parallel to his own conception of will is evident from the following passages:

Brahma means originally *force*, *will*, wish, and the propulsive power of creation.²

This origin of the world (this Samsara of the Buddhists) is itself already based on evil; that is to say, it is a sinful act of Brahma, for Indian mythology is everywhere transparent.³

The Vedas also teach no God creator, but a world-soul Brahm (in the neuter). Brahma, sprung from the navel of Vishnu with the four faces and as part of the Trimurti, is merely a popular personification of Brahm in the extremely transparent Indian mythology. He obviously represents the generation, the origin, of beings just as Vishnu does their acme, and Shiva their destruction and extinction. Moreover, his production of the world is a sinful act, just as is the world incarnation of Brahm.⁴

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 146-47(197).

² *MSR* 4, p. 377(18). Schopenhauer attributes this derivation of the word 'Brahma' to Max Müller, and he believes that it appears in an essay that Müller contributed to *Hyppolytus*.

³ *PP* 1, p. 62(75). See also *FFR* (1847), p. 184(141-42), where Schopenhauer states, 'Brahma who is born and dies to make way for other Brahmas, and whose production of the world is regarded as sin and guilt.'

⁴ *PP* 1, p. 127(144-45).

The importance of these passages cannot be over-emphasised. For they illustrate Schopenhauer's desire to interpret the doctrine of the *Vedas* so that it accords with his own conception of the thing-in-itself as will. It is also worth emphasising that in the second of the above passages he acknowledges that his characterisation of Brahma as evil is an interpretation of Indian mythology, rather than an actual statement of accepted Hindu doctrine. This is important since it is doubtful that the similarity between Brahma and the will is nearly as strong as Schopenhauer thinks. While Hindu doctrine asserts that Brahman is the sustainer of the world, it also maintains that Brahman is the ground of all value, the core of the true, the good, and the beautiful.¹ That Schopenhauer recognises that Brahma also has this role is suggested by the following passages:

Just as when Vishnu, according to a beautiful Indian myth, incarnates himself as a hero, Brahma at the same time comes into the world as the minstrel of his deeds.²

Therefore, what is moral is to be found between these two; it accompanies man as a light on his path from the affirmation to the denial of the will, or, mythically, from the entrance of original sin to salvation through faith in the mediation of the incarnate God (Avatar): *or, according to the teaching of the Veda, through all the rebirths that are the consequences of the works in each case, until right knowledge appears, and with it salvation (final emancipation), Moksha, i.e., reunion with Brahma.* But the Buddhists with complete frankness

¹ Kaplan, *The New World of Philosophy*, p. 242. See also S. Radhakrishnan, 'Hinduism', *The Legacy of India*, ed. Garratt, p. 271, who says, 'The Beyond is Within. Brahman is Auman. He is the *antaryamin*, the inner controller. He is not only the incommunicable mystery standing for ever in his own perfect light, bliss, and peace but also is here in us, upholding, sustaining us.'

² PP 2, p. 472(517).

describe the matter only negatively as Nirvana, which is the negation of the world or of Samsara. If Nirvana is defined as nothing, this means only that Samsara contains no single element that could serve to define or construct Nirvana. For this reason the Jains, who differ from the Buddhists only in name, call the Brahmins who believe in the Vedas, Sabdapramans, a nickname supposed to signify that they believe on hearsay what cannot be known or proved.¹

Such passages suggest that Schopenhauer sees Brahma as the source of good deeds and as the ultimate goal for those seeking salvation.

What are we to make of Schopenhauer's interpretation of Brahma as something that is evil, and whose sinful act creates this world of suffering? I suggest that Schopenhauer is attempting to interpret Brahman's role as sustainer of the cosmos in a way that accords with his own doctrine of will. But such an interpretation seems forced and artificial, since it is clearly incompatible with the Advaita conception of Brahman that Schopenhauer endorses elsewhere. I suggest that the tension created by these opposing conceptions of the nature of ultimate reality provides a plausible explanation that in part may account for the shift in his thinking between the publication of the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* and that of his later works. Whereas in the first volume Schopenhauer is emphatic that the thing-in-itself is exclusively will or will-to-live (Interpretations 1 and 2), in his later writings there are passages that suggest that the thing-in-itself is will in only one of its aspects, and that it has other aspects that are the focus of mystical awareness (Interpretation 3).

¹ WWR 2, p. 608(712) (italics mine).

I argued earlier that there are two striking instances in which Schopenhauer's doctrines do not find any agreement with the Advaita teaching. The first is his doctrine that the thing-in-itself, or ultimate reality, is a will that is the source of immense suffering in the world, a doctrine that seems incompatible with the Advaita conception of Brahman as the Holy Power. The second point of difference is that for Schopenhauer the thing-in-itself is knowable to normal consciousness, whereas in Advaita teaching, awareness of the higher truth that concerns ultimate reality comes only to those who achieve the special consciousness or pattern of life that comes with the practice of yoga.¹ Schopenhauer claims numerous times throughout his works that the thing-in-itself is will or will-to-live and that we are directly aware of it in self-consciousness. However, in Schopenhauer's later works there are passages in which he withdraws from this claim of direct acquaintance. Instead, he contends that introspective awareness is always temporal and that it conforms to the subject-object divide of phenomenal appearance. So it seems that awareness of the thing-in-itself is limited to those who have denied the will and who attain mystical awareness. For example:

Accordingly, at the end of my philosophy I have indicated the sphere of illuminism as something that exists but have guarded against setting even one foot thereon. For I have not undertaken to give an ultimate — explanation of the world's existence, but have only gone as far as is possible on the objective path of rationalism. I have left the ground free for illuminism where, in its own way, it may arrive at a solution to all problems without obstructing my path or having to engage in polemic against me.²

¹ See Kaplan, *The New World of Philosophy*, pp. 327-49.

² *PP* 2, p. 10(17).

Such passages are consistent with the Advaita teaching that only those who have attained to a higher consciousness can be acquainted with ultimate reality, but they contrast sharply with passages such as the following one in which Schopenhauer claims that we have a direct acquaintance with the thing-in-itself (or ultimate reality) in self-conscious awareness.¹

By looking inwards, every individual recognises in his inner being, which is his will, the thing-in-itself, and hence that which alone is everywhere real.²

Again, a plausible explanation that in part may account for this shift in Schopenhauer's thinking in the years following the publication of the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* is the increasing influence of Hindu ideas on his own doctrine concerning the knowability of the thing-in-itself. Consequently, in his later works his views change to reflect a greater alignment with Hindu doctrine (Interpretation 4). Nevertheless, since he never gives up his doctrine that the thing-in-itself, in at least one of its aspects, is will, he also continues to assert in these later works that this claim is grounded in a direct awareness in self-consciousness of the will as thing-in-itself (see Interpretations 1, 2 and 3).

5

To clarify how Eastern ideas might explain the shifts in Schopenhauer's thinking between the first and second volumes of *The World as Will and Representation*, it is useful to consider his understanding of both Hindu and Buddhist teaching. Having looked briefly at one school of Hindu thought with which it seems likely that Schopenhauer is acquainted, and examined the

¹ See Chapter 3, footnote 4, p. 70, for a discussion of this inconsistency in Schopenhauer's thought.

² *WWR* 2, p. 600(703).

similarities and differences that exist between the two, I now propose to consider Schopenhauer's understanding of Buddhist teaching.

It seems likely that with the increasing availability of literature on Buddhist teaching after 1818, that Schopenhauer would have been aware of the distinction between the two principal branches of Buddhism, Theravada and Mahayana.¹ That he is acquainted with Mahayana seems clear from his reference to *The Foe Koue Ki*,² translated by A. Rémusat and published in 1836. Dauer in her publication *Schopenhauer as Transmitter of Buddhist Ideas*, states that this book, one of the earliest reliable documents on Buddhism known in Germany, is Mahayanist,³ and she stresses the parallels between Schopenhauer's own doctrines and Mahayana teaching.⁴ Copleston, however, restricts comparisons between Schopenhauer and Buddhism to themes common to all Buddhist thinking, such as compassion, the transitory nature of all phenomena, and atheism.⁵ Kishan adopts a similar approach asserting that 'Schopenhauer has no particular predilection for any school of Buddhism.'⁶ Nanajivako, however, thinks that Schopenhauer is first acquainted with and influenced by the Theravada teaching of the Burmese, then in middle life becomes influenced by the Mahayana doctrine mainly through the writings on Tibetan Buddhism that were promoted by the Russian St. Petersburg Academy, and finally that in the later phase of his life he is influenced by the

¹ See Heinrich Dumoulin, 'Buddhism and Nineteenth-Century German Philosophy', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 42 (1981), p. 458, who says that all of the German philosophers Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche knew, though not too clearly, that Buddhism was divided into two principle branches. That Schopenhauer had acquaintance with the teachings of both is evident from the bibliography he provides in his chapter 'Sinology' in *On The Will in Nature*, and from his posthumous library. Included are books that refer to the Buddhism of the Ceylonese (Theravada), and to the Chinese (Mahayana).

² WWR 1, p. 381(472).

³ Dauer, *Schopenhauer as Transmitter of Buddhist Ideas*, p. 32.

⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

⁵ Copleston, *Arthur Schopenhauer*, p. 227.

⁶ B. V. Kishan, 'Schopenhauer and Buddhism' in *Schopenhauer: His Philosophical Achievement*, ed. Fox, p. 255.

Theravada Pali Buddhism of Ceylon.¹ Nanajivako bases this last claim on Schopenhauer's comment concerning two books on Buddhism written by Spence Hardy after his twenty years stay in Ceylon. Schopenhauer says of these books that they 'have given me a deeper insight into the essence of the Buddhist dogma than any other work'.² However, as they are not published till 1850 and 1853 respectively it is difficult to agree with Nanajivako's claim that Schopenhauer's comment is evidence of the stronger Theravada influence at the time of his preparation of the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation*. While Schopenhauer refers to these books three times in the second volume, and also once in the first volume, these references must have been added only in the 1859 third editions of those volumes. Finally, Abelsen, argues that Schopenhauer's conviction of being an original European Buddhist kept him from making a detailed philosophical comparison between his own system and those of the Buddhist schools with which he is acquainted. Consequently, contends Abelsen, the connections, which Schopenhauer thinks are obvious, remain a matter of atmosphere rather than content.³ Given this diversity of opinion, my strategy in discussing the likely influence of Buddhism on Schopenhauer is to consider the general comparison between Schopenhauer's philosophy and what is taken to be the essential teaching of Buddhism.⁴ However, when specifically Mahayanist doctrines are of

¹ Bhikkhu Nanajivako, *Schopenhauer and Buddhism* (Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1970), pp. 18-20.

² See *WN*, p. 362n(327n).

³ Peter Abelsen, 'Schopenhauer and Buddhism', *Philosophy East & West* 43, 2 (1993), p. 255.

⁴ In Abelsen's article he argues that any worthwhile comparison must involve the four basic forms of Buddhist philosophy in their own right rather than merely looking at Buddhism as *such* (see Abelsen, 'Schopenhauer and Buddhism', p. 256). I agree that this approach is desirable if we wish to determine that actual correspondences between Schopenhauer's philosophy and Buddhism as currently understood. However, since my concern is to look at the possible influence of Buddhist ideas on Schopenhauer's thought, and since we are not in a position to know with any certainty the extent and nature of his knowledge of Buddhism, it is legitimate in this case to restrict the comparison to those more general tenets of Buddhism with which Schopenhauer is likely to have been acquainted.

importance I draw upon them. In this strategy, I follow Dauer, although as will become clear, I do not agree with all her conclusions.

The basic doctrine taught by the Buddha is summed up in the Four Noble Truths. That Schopenhauer is aware of this doctrine is clear from a passage in the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation* in which he lists the four truths.¹

They affirm the following:

1. Life is permeated by suffering and dissatisfaction.
2. The origin of suffering lies in craving or thirst.
3. The cessation of suffering is possible through the cessation of craving.
4. The way to this cessation of suffering is through the Eight-fold Path.

This is an ascending series of practices; the first two concern the right frame of mind of the aspirant, the next three concern ethical requirements, and the last three concern meditation techniques that bring serenity and release. The attainment of peace and insight is called *nirvana*, and upon its attainment the saint, upon death, is not reborn.²

It is not difficult to find parallels between the above truths and Schopenhauer's own doctrines. Corresponding to the first truth is Schopenhauer's pessimistic world-view, which derives from his conviction that the world is a wretched place, permeated by terrible, inescapable and endless suffering.³ Corresponding to the second truth is his doctrine that suffering results from the endless and ultimately aimless striving of all beings,

¹ WWR 2, p. 623(730). Schopenhauer refers to E. Burnouf, *Introduction à l'histoire du Bouddhisme indien*, Paris, 1844, for an explanation of these truths.

² *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edwards, s.v. 'Buddhism', by Ninian Smart.

³ WWR 1, 309-10(388), pp. 311-12(390), pp. 322-23(403-4); WWR 2, pp. 581-84(680-84); PP 2, p. 293(318).

a striving that is inevitable because all beings are manifestations of the metaphysical will, whose essence is to strive endlessly.¹ The Buddhist *samsara*, the empirical world permeated by thirst and craving, corresponds with Schopenhauer's world of representation, the phenomenal world. Furthermore, just as *samsara* is said to be governed by the causal nexus, so Schopenhauer's world of representation is governed by the four roots of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, one of which is the law of causality. Corresponding to the Buddhist doctrine of the impermanence of *samsara* is the conditioned nature of Schopenhauer's world of representation. Dauer makes the claim that it is only the will in its positive aspect that corresponds to thirst, the principle of *samsara*; she asserts that Schopenhauer's doctrine of negation of the will entails that, taken in its negative aspect, the will is identical with nirvana. She thinks that while Buddha uses two separate words 'thirst' and 'nirvana' to indicate the two opposing aspects of one pair of antithesis, Schopenhauer uses one single word 'will' to indicate the same pair. She believes that herein lies the most fundamental difference between them; whereas Schopenhauer dares to call the absolute or thing-in-itself by name, the Buddha methodically refrains from explicitly defining it.² This is an important point and one that I shall return to.

Corresponding to the third truth, namely that cessation of suffering is possible by cessation of craving, is Schopenhauer's doctrine that salvation is possible by denial of the will.³ Associated with this third truth is another doctrine that finds parallels in Schopenhauer's philosophy. It is the Buddhist teaching of re-birth without continuation of individuality. The essential idea of

¹ *WWR* 1, p. 164(217), p. 196(252), pp. 342-43(427), p. 351(438), pp. 352-53(439), pp. 363-64(451-52); *WWR* 2, p. 204(237-38), p. 580(679), p. 599(702-3); *PP* 1, p. 303(328).

² Dauer, *Schopenhauer as Transmitter of Buddhist Ideas*, p. 15.

³ *WWR* 1, p. 379(469), p. 397(491), p. 405(500), p. 412(508); *WWR* 2, p. 609(713), pp. 634-37(743-47).

the 'wheel of life' is that attachment to life (thirst) causes actions (karma), and karma conditions the next life. It is thus thirst that is the energy that drives the chain of re-births, and karma that determines the conditions of the reborn. Consciousness and hence individuality spring from the karma of the previous life and are therefore derivative and fleeting. This idea is also expressed in the Buddhist doctrine of non-self (anatta), according to which there is no enduring self. Parallel to these ideas is Schopenhauer's doctrine that it is the will that endures through endless rounds of births and deaths; consciousness, by contrast, is but a fleeting manifestation of will that perishes with the physical death of beings who possess it. Hence, corresponding to the Buddhist idea of thirst is Schopenhauer's idea that all forms of life are essentially will; corresponding to the Buddhist doctrine of non-self is Schopenhauer's doctrine that consciousness is fleeting; and corresponding to the Buddhist idea that with cessation of thirst release from suffering is possible is Schopenhauer's doctrine that with denial of all willing salvation is attainable.

The next comparison concerns the problem of Nirvana and its counterpart in Schopenhauer's philosophy. In Buddhist language, with the destruction of thirst, the individual attains nirvana. Similarly, in Schopenhauer's language, with the negation of will the individual attains the kind of awareness that is described by the mystics. In this form of awareness the phenomenal forms of space, time and subject-object disappear. Some critics argue that Schopenhauer's doctrine of denial of the will leads to a dismal nihilism. For if the thing-in-itself is will the will's destruction leaves only nothingness. Consequently, Schopenhauer's support for the mystics' claims is simply inconsistent with his metaphysics.¹ However, such conclusions overlook the

¹ See Navia, 'Reflections on Schopenhauer's Pessimism', pp. 178-81; Erich Heller, *Thomas Mann: The Ironic German* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), pp. 50-51; Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1961), p. 726.

passages in Schopenhauer's writings where he talks of the *relative* nature of nothingness, and in which he refers to aspects of the thing-in-itself other than will. In the following passage, he draws parallels between his own doctrine of relative nothingness and Buddhist teaching.

As a rule, the death of every good person is peaceful and gentle; but to die willingly, to die gladly, to die cheerfully, is the prerogative of the resigned, of him who gives up and denies the will-to-live . . . He willingly gives up the existence that we know; what comes to him instead of it is in our eyes nothing, because our existence in reference to that one is nothing. The Buddhist faith calls that existence Nirvana, that is to say, extinction.¹

Dauer comments that it is rather surprising that Schopenhauer interprets the Buddhist doctrine in this way, since it is only in recent times that scholars have realised that by the notion of Nirvana Buddhists do not always mean a sheer void. Dauer thinks that Schopenhauer's interpretation lends support to the view that his understanding of Buddhism is most consistent with the Mahayanist school. According to Mahayana Buddhism, nirvana is *samsara* and *samsara* is nirvana; in other words, these two are just two modes of the absolute thusness. A being in *samsara* who perceives the limitations and impermanence of the world, already senses nirvana, and so for them the highest ideal is no longer nirvana, but thusness. Dauer thinks that this view is mirrored in Schopenhauer's philosophy; the thing-in-itself is capable of two modes of act, one affirmative, the other negative, and that we know by

¹ WWR 2, p. 508(596). See also WWR 2, p. 608(712), WWR 1, p. 412n(508n).

experience only the affirmative side of the same substance.¹ In support of her interpretation she quotes the following passage, which I repeat from Chapter 2.

Contrary to silly objections, I observe that the denial of the will-to-live does not in any way assert the annihilation of a substance, but the mere act of not-willing; that which hitherto willed no longer wills. As we know this being, this essence, the will, as thing-in-itself merely in and through the act of willing, we are incapable of saying or comprehending what it still is or does after it has given up that act. And so for us who are the phenomenon of willing, this denial is a passing over into nothing.²

Dauer also quotes the following passage to support her view that 'our comparison of the will with nirvana in one case and with *samsara* (thirst) in the other is fully justified: nirvana is the negative mode of the will, while *samsara* is its affirmative one.'

That which in us *affirms itself as will-to-live* is also that which *denies this will* and thereby becomes free from existence and the sufferings thereof. Now if we consider it in this latter capacity as different and separate from us who are the self-affirming will-to-live; and if from this point of view we wish to call '*God*' that which is opposed to the world (this being the affirmation of the will-to-live), then this could be done for the benefit of those who do not want to drop the expression. Yet it would stand merely for an unknown *x* of which only the negation is known to us, namely that it denies the will-to-live as we affirm it, and hence in so far as it is different from us and the world,

¹ Dauer, 'Schopenhauer as Transmitter of Buddhist Ideas', p. 20. I think it is clear that in the last sentence Dauer is here referring to the experience of normal consciousness and not to mystical consciousness.

² *PP* 2, p. 312(339).

but again is identical with both through its ability to be the affirmer as well as the denier, as soon as it *wants* to.¹

Dauer believes that what Schopenhauer calls 'x' here is precisely what the Mahayana Buddhists call 'thusness', for it can swing between nirvana and samsara. Furthermore, Schopenhauer's contention that no predicates can be affirmatively applied to the 'x', and that every predicate must be negated, accords with the enigmatic teaching of Sunyata. For the sunya means 'void' in the sense that it is beyond any predicates.²

I agree with Dauer that Schopenhauer's understanding of the Mahayana conception of Nirvana accords well with his own doctrine concerning denial of the will. However, I would add that it is only in those passages where Schopenhauer allows that the thing-in-itself has aspects other than will, that his metaphysics can accommodate the notion of a relative nothingness that accompanies denial of the will. For if the thing-in-itself is exclusively will or will-to-live, denial of the will entails either nihilism or the impossibility of salvation. But if it is allowed that the thing-in-itself has multiple aspects, some of which are the focus of mystical awareness, then Dauer's claim that 'what Schopenhauer calls 'x' here is precisely what the Mahayana Buddhists call 'thusness' is more plausible.

Dauer's assertion that the two modes of absolute thusness, samsara and nirvana, exactly mirror Schopenhauer's claim that the thing-in-itself is capable of two modes of act, one affirmative and the other negative, also requires comment. According to her formula, samsara is equivalent to the phenomenal world of objectified will, nirvana to the state of denial of the will. A further

¹ MSR 3, p. 376(343).

² Dauer, 'Schopenhauer as Transmitter of Buddhist Ideas', p. 21. See also Abelsen, 'Schopenhauer and Buddhism', p. 263.

correspondence, not noted by Dauer, is that just as a being in samsara may already sense nirvana, so for Schopenhauer, the person who practises benevolence is already on the road to achieving the awareness that accompanies the mystical state.¹ While I acknowledge the plausibility of these correspondences between Buddhist doctrine and aspects of Schopenhauer's philosophy, his central positive claim that the thing-in-itself *is* will does not find a parallel in Buddhist teaching.² Although Dauer allows that absolute thusness is samsara in one of its modes, it seems that the thirst or craving that is the cause of suffering is restricted to samsara: for she says of thusness that it is 'the highest ideal'.³ By contrast, according to Schopenhauer, the thing-in-itself *is* will, it has an essential nature of endless striving, and it is the source of immense struggle and suffering in the phenomenal world.⁴ Consequently, to achieve salvation, it must be denied completely; for only then can one experience those other aspects of the thing-in-itself that might plausibly be considered equivalent to the Buddhist thusness. From this analysis of the similarities and differences between the Buddhist conception of thusness and Schopenhauer's conception of the thing-in-itself, it is clear that it is only his later views on the nature of the thing-in-itself that bear a partial correspondence to the notion of thusness. And this fact adds plausibility to the view that the

¹ See *PP* 2, p. 219(239); *BM*, p. 212(313).

² Charles Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1921), p. 208, states: 'Many passages in the Pitakas justify the idea that the force which constructs the universe of our experience is an impersonal appetite, analogous to the Will of Schopenhauer. The shorter formula quoted above in which it is said that the *sankhâras* [phenomena] come from *tanhâ* [thirst] also admits of such an interpretation. But the longer chain does not, or at least it considers *tanhâ* not as a cosmic force but simply as a state of the human mind.' This passage indicates that the origin of *tanhâ* [thirst] is not a settled issue among commentators. However, I think that even if *tanhâ* is interpreted as a cosmic force its identification with the will as thing-in-itself is still problematic. For a cosmic force is arguably part of the phenomenal world whereas the will as thing-in-itself is not. Nevertheless, at the phenomenal level, Eliot's comment seems justified. For at this level there is an obvious similarity between the Buddhist idea that life is driven by 'thirst' and Schopenhauer's idea that all life is 'striving'.

See also Abelsen, 'Schopenhauer and Buddhism', pp. 264-65.

³ Dauer, 'Schopenhauer as Transmitter of Buddhist Ideas', p. 20.

⁴ *WWR* 1, p. 309(387-88), p. 379(469), p. 397(491).

increasing influence of Buddhist ideas on Schopenhauer's thinking may in part account for this shift in his thinking concerning the nature of the thing-in-itself.

A further correspondence that Dauer notes between Buddhist thought and the philosophy of Schopenhauer concerns the importance that each places on intuitive knowledge. For the Buddhist monk, the practice of yoga in the form of meditation is said to create the ecstatic feeling of union with the absolute, the intuitive enjoyment of a foretaste of Nirvana. For Schopenhauer, intuitive knowledge is the basis of aesthetic experience, whose importance lies in that it is a temporary release from the will and a foretaste of the experience of denial of the will. It is also the basis of all moral feeling, and most importantly it is the means by which Schopenhauer justifies his claim that the thing-in-itself is will. Dauer mentions this point in the following passage.

Schopenhauer himself knew that his "will" was an equivalent of the *brahman*; only the term "will" is better chosen than the term *brahman*. . . . The implication is that one cannot grasp the absolute by ordinary methods of cognition, but must first discover it in his own inner experience.¹

While Dauer allows that a being in samsara who senses the limitations and impermanence of this world is already sensing nirvana,² she does not comment on the difference between that claim and Schopenhauer's much stronger claim that in ordinary consciousness we are directly aware of ultimate reality in the form of the will as thing-in-itself. By contrast, Nanajivako states that Schopenhauer's claim that in ordinary experience we can know the will as thing-in-itself, entails that:

¹ Dauer, 'Schopenhauer as Transmitter of Buddhist Ideas', p. 13.

² Ibid., p. 20.

The "thing-in-itself" loses all attributes of its "transcendent" and "absolute" nature. Instead of being *sat-cit-ananda* ("being-consciousness-bliss") of Sankara, it becomes the principle of all ill and suffering, which therefore should be repudiated and abandoned "all"-together.¹

In the above passage I interpret Nanajivako to be drawing a contrast between the transcendent, absolute nature of Sankara's conception of ultimate reality, and the phenomenal, temporal nature of the will that is suggested by Schopenhauer's claim that our experience of it is in self-conscious awareness. While I agree with Dauer that for Schopenhauer the will that we encounter in self-consciousness *is* transcendent, Nanajivako's interpretation highlights both the epistemological difficulty attached to this claim and the fact that it seems incompatible with Sankara's doctrine concerning both the nature of ultimate reality and the means by which it can be experienced. Dauer overlooks this key difference between the ontological and epistemological doctrines of Hinduism and Buddhism on the one hand and that of Schopenhauer on the other. Indeed, Schopenhauer's increasing awareness of the incompatibility of his own epistemological claims and those of the Hindus and Buddhists offers a plausible explanation for the appearance of passages in his later works in which he seems to withdraw from the claim that we have a direct awareness of the will as thing-in-itself (Interpretation 4).

Finally, there is the fourth truth of Buddha's teaching, which outlines the eight-fold way of attaining enlightenment through the adoption of the right view, the correct ethical practices, and the recommended ascetic and

¹ Nanajivako, *Schopenhauer and Buddhism*, p. 60. Abelsen, 'Schopenhauer and Buddhism', pp. 261-62, argues that for Schopenhauer the will is not identical with the thing-in-itself, but instead is the most direct of all phenomena, and as such is the pre-eminent *symbol* of the Real. In adopting this interpretation, Abelsen's position is subject to the objections that I raised against Interpretation 4.

contemplative practices. Corresponding to these steps is Schopenhauer's view that denial of the will requires first of all that a person sees through the *principium individuationis* constituted by space and time. This insight is reflected in a shift from egoistic to altruistic behaviour, and finally to the practice of meditation and a complete withdrawal from the world.¹

In addition to the correspondences noted above between the Buddha's Four Noble Truths and Schopenhauer's doctrines, Dauer also notes that they share a similar view of time as cyclical, and that both are atheistic. Nevertheless, she thinks that Schopenhauer's atheism was not derived solely from metaphysical considerations, but was also an emotive response generated by his conception of theism as part of the philosophy of reason, whose most vocal champion was the detested Hegel.²

In assessing the differences between Buddhist doctrine and Schopenhauer's own ideas, Dauer believes that the only difference worth serious attention is that whereas Schopenhauer identifies the will as the thing-in-itself, Buddha keeps silent about the absolute. Another difference that follows from this is that whereas for Schopenhauer reality is monistic, since the essence of all phenomena is the undifferentiated will as thing-in-itself, for early Buddhism reality is pluralistic since it only allows talk of samsara, or the variegated world of phenomena. She notes that on this point Schopenhauer is metaphysically closer to Brahmanism.³ However, she also says that later Buddhism absorbs more of Brahmanism and consequently is quite similar to Schopenhauer's metaphysical system.⁴ In Mahayana doctrine the thusness is the only absolute and origin of all being and non-being, and is therefore monistic. Hence, the

¹ WWR 1, p. 390(483), pp. 391-93(484-86); WWR 2, p. 606(709-10).

² Dauer, 'Schopenhauer as Transmitter of Buddhist Ideas', pp. 29-34.

³ The Advaita school of Sankara is a revival of the earlier monistic Brahmanism (See *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edwards, s.v. 'Hinduism', by Ninian Smart).

⁴ See Glasenapp, 'The Influence of Indian Thought', p. 205, for a similar remark.

only difference of importance is that Schopenhauer identifies the thing-in-itself as will, while the Buddha keeps silent.

Dauer concludes by arguing that the greatness of Buddha and Kant alike is that, unlike Schopenhauer, they both refuse to speculate on the nature of ultimate reality. Nevertheless, she thinks that despite inconsistency and incompleteness, Schopenhauer can legitimately be considered a follower of Kant, and that despite his exaggeration of certain theoretical claims, and his greater specificity on certain points, he can also be considered a Buddhist. I agree with much of Dauer's analysis of the points of resemblance and difference between Schopenhauer's doctrines and those of the Buddhism, but disagree with her on the following two points. First, whereas she considers that the Buddhist doctrine of *thusness* corresponds to Schopenhauer's doctrine of the thing-in-itself, the similarity is problematic. While *thusness* has a parallel with those aspects of the thing-in-itself that become the focus of mystical awareness, there does not seem to be any place in Buddhist thought for Schopenhauer's conception of the thing-in-itself as will. For *thusness* is said to be the highest ideal, whereas the thing-in-itself as will is the source of endless suffering, escape from which is only possible with the complete annihilation of the thing-in-itself as will.

Despite this difference, Dauer is right in seeing some similarity between *thusness* and those other aspects of the thing-in-itself that Schopenhauer speaks of in passages in his later works. And it is plausible to suggest that the shift in Schopenhauer's view to this multi-aspect conception of the thing-in-itself may in part be accounted for by the influence of both Buddhist and Hindu teaching regarding the nature of ultimate reality (Interpretation 3).

My second disagreement with Dauer's analysis concerns Schopenhauer's epistemological claim that we are directly aware of the will as thing-in-itself in self-consciousness. While Dauer accepts that Schopenhauer makes this claim,

she does not comment on its lack of correspondence with Buddhist doctrine, and in this, she overlooks a key difference between Schopenhauer and the Buddhists. Again, it is plausible to suggest that the passages in Schopenhauer's later works in which he seems to withdraw from his claim of direct awareness of the thing-in-itself, claiming instead that we are only aware of our phenomenal will, may in part be accounted for by the increasing influence of Buddhist teaching on his thinking (Interpretation 4).

However, concerning what Dauer takes to be the main difference between Buddhist and Schopenhauerian doctrines, namely that whereas Buddha is silent about the nature of ultimate reality, Schopenhauer declares that it is will, I am in complete agreement. And most importantly, Schopenhauer's increasing acquaintance with, and declared admiration for Buddhist teaching, provides a plausible explanation for the third shift in his thinking, namely, his *explicit* attempt to assimilate his own views on what can be said about the thing-in-itself with Eastern doctrine. While there are passages throughout his works in which he suggests that all talk of the thing-in-itself is metaphorical, it is only in his later works that he attempts to demonstrate that his views coincide with those of the East.¹

6

In summary: There are three discernible shifts in Schopenhauer's thinking. These shifts may in part be explained by his increasing knowledge and admiration for the teachings of the Hindus and Buddhists. The first shift concerns the knowability of the thing-in-itself; the second concerns the nature of the thing-in-itself; the third concerns his explicit attempt to assimilate his own views on what can be said about the thing-in-itself to Eastern teaching. The influence of Hindu and Buddhist thought, which limits awareness of

¹ WWR 2, p. 325(380), pp. 325-26(381); WWR 1, pp. 412n(508n).

ultimate reality to those who have achieved a heightened state of consciousness, offers a plausible explanation that may in part account for the first shift. For in his later works, while Schopenhauer still asserts that in introspection we have direct awareness of the will as thing-in-itself (Interpretations 1, 2 and 3), there are also passages in which he withdraws this claim. Instead he reverts to the Kantian view that introspection yields only knowledge of phenomena (Interpretations 4). The influence of Hindu thought, which describes ultimate reality as a Holy Power and the source of value, and the influence of Buddhist thought, which describes it in terms of Nirvana, offers a plausible explanation that may in part account for the second shift. For while in his later works Schopenhauer still claims that the thing-in-itself is will or will-to-live (Interpretations 1 and 2), he introduces the idea that it has other aspects (Interpretation 3). The influence of Buddhist thought, which insists that no words can be used to describe Nirvana, offers a plausible explanation that may in part account for the third shift. For it is only in his later works and in later additions to his earlier works that Schopenhauer explicitly attempts to assimilate his own views on the limitations of language in describing the thing-in-itself to Eastern views. In short, the influence of Eastern thought offers a plausible explanation that may in part account for the shifts in Schopenhauer's thinking, shifts that give rise to the possibility of multiple interpretations of his claim that the thing-in-itself is will.

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